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ARGOSY

OCT. 7

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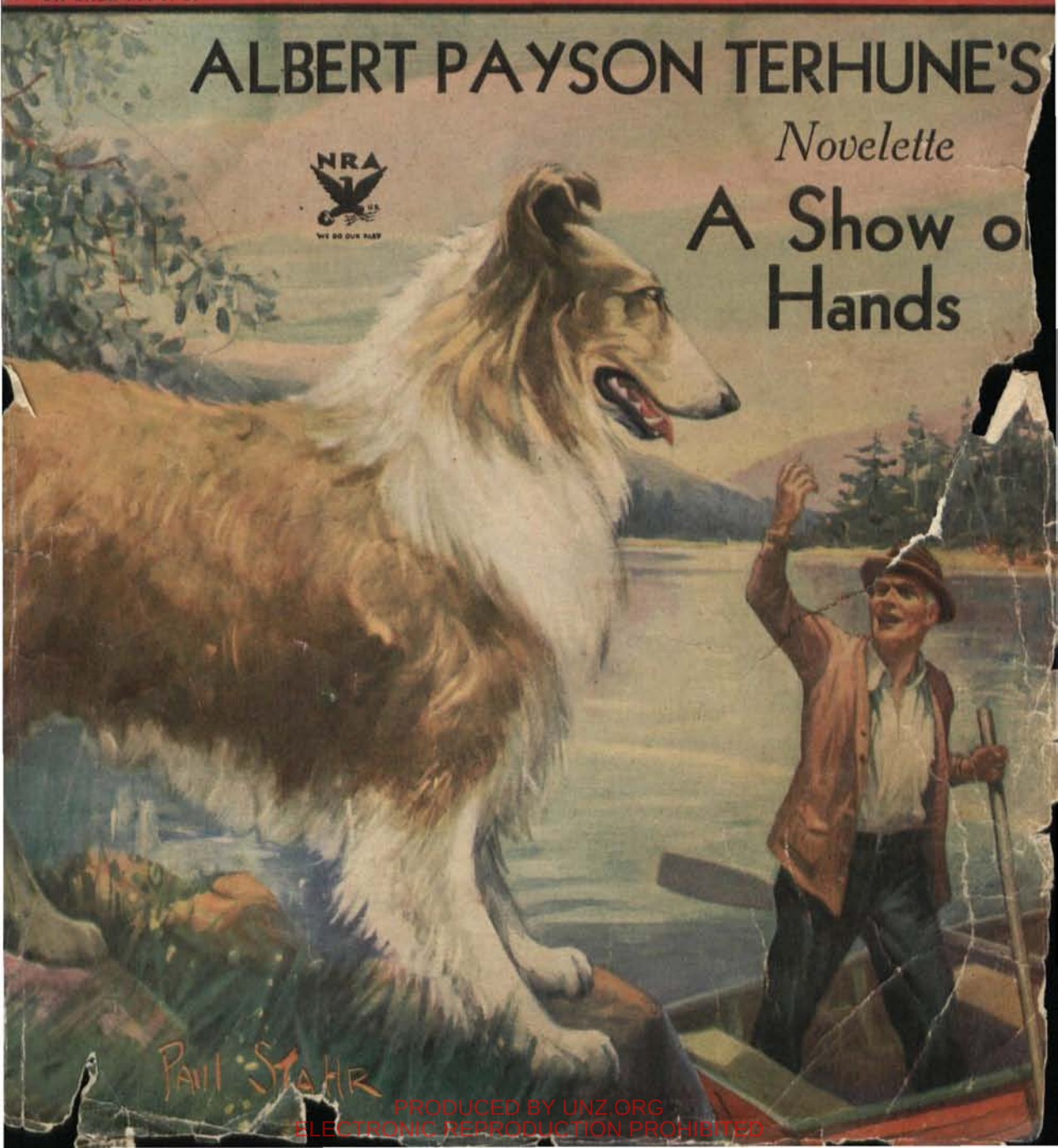
WEEKLY

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE'S

Novelette

A Show o Hands



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HOW'S YOUR BREATH TODAY

You can't be popular if your breath is not agreeable.

How *is* your breath today? Is it agreeable—or an offense to others?

The truth is, *you do not know*. You only hope it's normal—but the chances are that it is otherwise. Halitosis (unpleasant breath) may be caused by so many conditions, which exist even in normal mouths, that no one is immune from it.

Common causes are fermenting food particles on the teeth or gums, decaying teeth, leaky fillings, unwise eating and drinking, and temporary or chronic infections of the mouth, nose, and throat.

Why take the risk of needlessly offending others when by the use of Listerine, you can instantly make your breath wholesome and agreeable? Simply rinse the mouth with it.

Listerine halts fermentation, decay, and infection, the primary causes of odors, and then gets rid of the odors themselves. The mouth feels clean, refreshed, and invigorated.

Don't expect Listerine's quick, pleasant deodorant effect from ordinary, bargain mouth washes which are too weak to be effective or so harsh they may be dangerous. Repeated tests have shown that Listerine instantly overcomes odors that ordinary mouth washes cannot hide in 12 hours. When you want to be *sure*, use Listerine, the safe antiseptic and quick deodorant. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo.

Make it right with LISTERINE

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BEWARE RUPTURE

THAT "DOESN'T BOTHER MUCH"

Suction Cell Retainer is the newest invention for rupture. No bulk, no slipping. Holds and lets Nature heal.

Light as a Feather

Yet...Holds Rupture!

An Ohio Scientist Is Now Helping Nature Rescue Thousands Of Rupture Victims. No More Cruelty. No More Cumbersome Contraptions of ancient times. His new appliance works without embarrassing bulk, without leg straps or springs or bars or leather. You will be astonished at its tiny size, its revolutionary coolness and convenience. His test offer actually includes an extra appliance sent to you absolutely FREE. Mail coupon today for the most astounding rupture information you ever read. It is Free and will come in plain cover.

NOW rupture victims can abandon the needless pain and discomfort of torturous trusses. Science has at last developed a tiny, comfortable appliance of tremendous interest for every rupture sufferer. This device is called "Suction Cell Retainer." It has been developed and perfected as a result of having made more than a million rupture appliances. With it comes an astounding natural help for putting real strength into the abdomen, so as to aid Nature in preventing recurrence of rupture.

Results with Suction Cell Retainer are often so remarkable, so quick, so simple, that you too may marvel. It has no leg straps. It expands and contracts as easily as your own flesh. When you walk, run, bend, or exercise it tends to squeeze itself, not the part of your body it rests against. It is so entirely lacking in bulk and weight that even some ruptured men's wives have not known they were ruptured.

PERSONAL GUARANTY

Suction Cell Retainer must give the results that you expect or you simply return it. If your rupture is not actually and positively reduced in size during the free trial we allow, send it back and demand the return of your deposit as agreed. If 30 days trial are not enough, write us and we will extend the time to 60, 90 days or even four months if you desire.

Think what the above words promise, not only in new comfort and immediate relief, but also the possibility of ultimate FREEDOM! No system like this ever devised! At last, comes sensible relief. Pleasant. Solid comfort. Natural way. Reasonable in price. And you don't need to wait forever for results!

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Send no money. Just mail coupon and you will receive our newest book about rupture, together with our attractive, bona-fide offer of special FREE appliance, all in plain packet. It will open your eyes.

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Print address and be sure of reply

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ARGOSY

Action Stories of Every Variety

VOLUME 241 — CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER 7, 1933 — NUMBER 5

SIX NOVELETTES AND SHORT STORIES

A Show of Hands (Novelette—Complete) . . Albert Payson Terhune 2
A kidnap plot—and a dog

Terror Island (Novelette—Complete) . . . . . Ralph R. Perry 46
Bellow Bill tackles a South Seas mystery

Green for Danger (Short Story) . . . . . Anthony M. Rud 70
A city gunman in the Alabama woods

Men of Daring (True Story in Pictures) . . . . . Stookie Allen 104
"Tex" O'Reilly, a roving fighter

Chicken Jumbo (Short Story) . . . . . John A. Thompson 106
A wrestler in the bull ring

Hick Sheriff (Short Story) . . . . . Charles Haven 138
Gambling on a man's honor

SERIALS

Captain Redspurs (Six Parts—Part II) . . . . F. V. W. Mason 24
A cavalry leader in the Civil War

The Fire Planet (Three Parts—Conclusion) . . . . Ray Cummings 79
A treasure-hunt on a burning world

The White Indian (Six Parts—Part V) . . . . . Max Brand 116
A white youth among Cheyenne warriors

OTHER FEATURES

COVER DESIGN . . . . . Paul Stahr
When Dogs Wore Armor . . . . . Bruce Bryan 23
The Mystery Sea . . . . . Ellen Stevenson 69
The Men Who Make the Argosy—ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE . . 142
Argonotes 143
Looking Ahead! 144

This magazine is on sale every Wednesday

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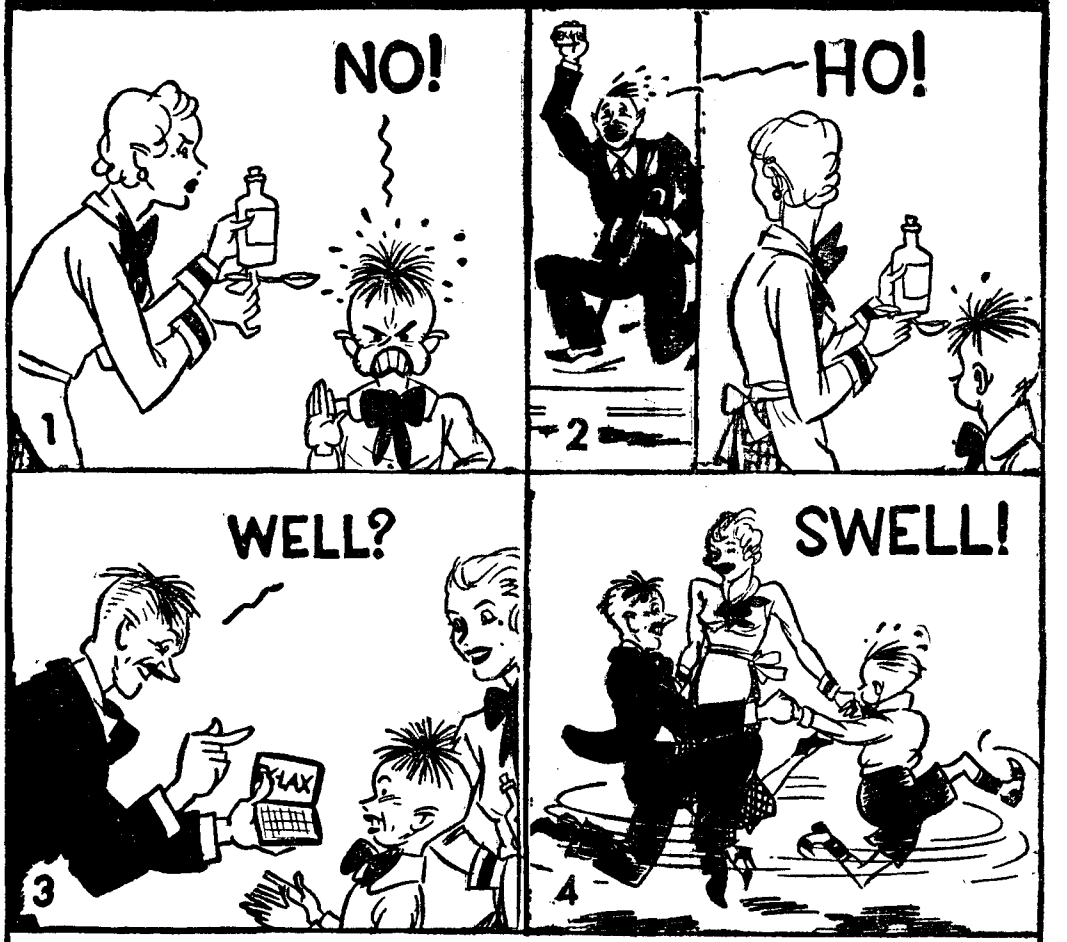
DADDY SAVES THE DAY

BY JEFFERSON MACHAMER



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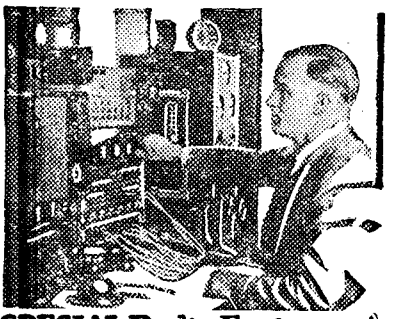

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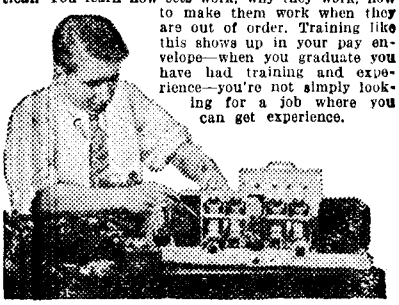

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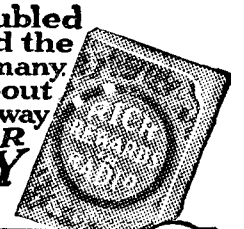

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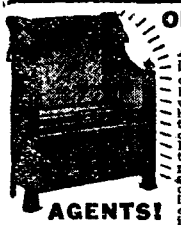

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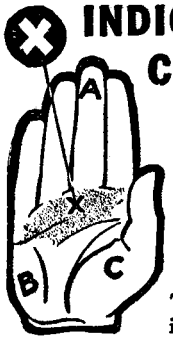

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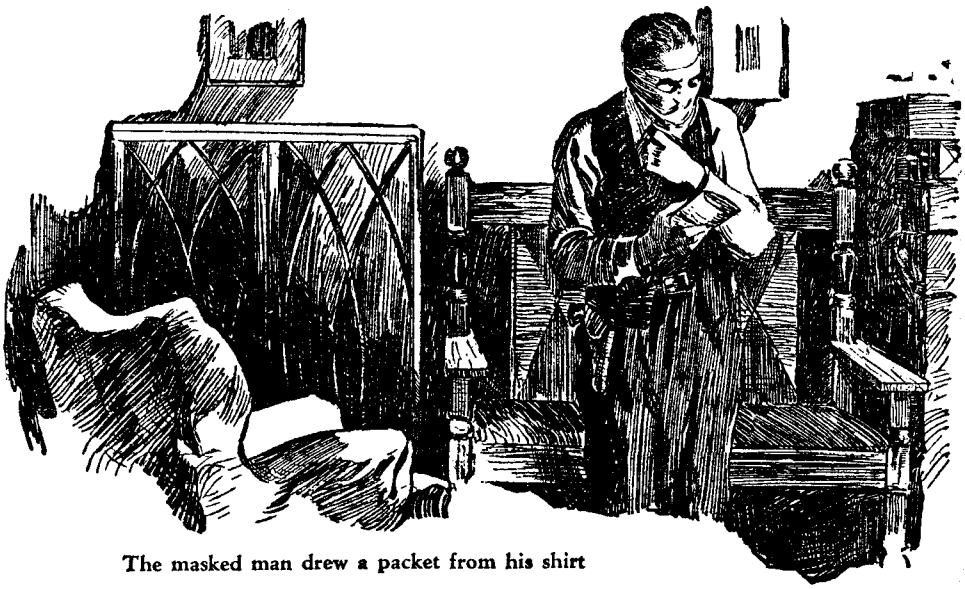

The masked man drew a packet from his shirt

A Show of Hands

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

Author of "The Abyssinian Prune-Hound," "The Dog from the Skies," etc.

Rich old Ethan Brock claimed he had no friends—but Bruce, his collie, wouldn't have it that way

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

A CANNY MESSENGER.

"IT was the first vacation you've had in three years, eh?" rasped Ethan Brock. "Now, isn't that terrible? I wonder you've kept alive so long."

Carter, his secretary, fidgeted, his clean-cut young face reddening at the sardonic thread in the dry voice.

"I—I just happened to mention it," said the secretary.

"Of course you did," assented Brock. "I noticed that. Everybody just happens to mention the same thing. If I've heard one man say he hasn't had a vacation in so-and-so-many years I've heard fifty say it. And always with a funny mixture of brag and self-pity. If all those non-vacation speeches were laid end to end, they'd reach from here to their speakers' chances of winning a real success in life. And that's farther than from here to Mars."

"Yes, sir," said Carter, seeking to turn back to the work on his desk and thus cut short the old financier's harangue. But Ethan Brock would not have it so. When the oldster got started on an oration, he was non-stoppable.

"This vacation I'm going on, tomorrow," Ethan continued, "this outing I've been postponing till you could

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Brock's face was weary and discouraged

get back here from your fortnight's loafing—well, this will be *my* first vacation since—guess when?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Carter. "I don't remember your taking a vacation in the three years since I've been working for you."

"No," said Brock. "And if you were to try to remember the date of my last vacation, you'd have to remember back to a long while before you were born. You're somewhere around thirty-two, aren't you? And I was sixty-two, last week. I was in the middle of a high school vacation when I had to hustle for a job, because my father died insolvent.

"I was sixteen years old that summer. It was my last vacation. I've never had time for another, till now. I haven't time for this one. And I don't want it. But I'm taking it. Because that silly trio of specialists say I must. At least, that's the excuse I'm giving. And that's why I've waited till you got back. Not that you're indispensable, at all. The Indispensable Employee isn't born, yet. And when he shall be, his name won't be Carter."

"No, sir," answered Carter, quietly; once more making as though to turn back to the desk.

Three years of service as old Ethan Brock's personal secretary had taught the young man to exercise a tireless self-control. For Brock was in no sense a pleasant employer. He demanded hard work of his employees. He set them an example by working five times as hard as did any of them. Moreover, long decades of climbing unaided from shabby genteel poverty to multimillionairedom, had soured his temper and shaken his health and nerves. Cruel experiences during that grueling climb had left him with a wholesale distrust of those around him and of the world at large.

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Now that he had more money than he could spend and more power than he could use, his one wholly trusted friend was his big collie, Bruce. On Bruce he centered the affection that should have been divided among a horde of human friends.

"Those three pill-financiers," resumed Brock, "tell me I must get out into the open—up in the mountains—for at least a month; and I must live as close to nature as I can. I told them that was what ailed me; that I'd spent too many years close to nature—human nature—and that it had pretty well wrecked me. But they kept at me till I rented that Charles camp, up at Gusepple Lake. Old Vandam Charles spent a fortune in making it as rough and primitive as a lumber camp; and in stocking his lake. I'm taking it over, along with three of his men. I'd rather go to jail. But—"

The almost shut study door was shoved wide, wholly without ceremony. The bang of the knob against a chairback made Brock turn about, scowling at the intrusion. But the glower was wiped from his lean old face as he saw who had broken in thus, on his business privacy, without taking the trouble to knock for admittance. Ethan's leathery lips softened into a grin.

Across the rug-dotted expanse of floor, from the threshold, a dog was advancing playfully toward him. The intruder was a collie lithely powerful of build, massive of burnished coat, classic of head. His deep-set dark eyes just now were dancing with fun. There was a ludicrous strut to his wontedly sedate walk. Straight up to his master he came.

"Message, eh?" Brock greeted him, runnning a bony hand along the dog's collar and bringing to light a twist of paper from beneath the tumble of mane.

"You have good eyes, sir," ventured Carter. "My own eyes are fairly sharp. But I didn't see that bit of paper as Bruce came toward you."

"You didn't see it," explained Brock, "because it wasn't in sight. The instant I set eyes on him I knew he had a message. He never struts in that fool way, any other time. Geoghan taught him to carry messages, the first month Bruce was here. It isn't much of a stunt. But I encourage it because it makes the dog so vainglorious and so happy. I don't know why it should, but it does. He seems to think he's performing the cleverest trick in the world. Geoghan says many dogs feel that way about it. And, after all, maybe it *is* rather wise of him never to make a mistake in the person he'd told to carry notes to."

WHILE he rambled on, Brock untwisted the paper, glanced at it, scribbled a word or two under its few written lines, retwisted the note and thrust it back into a clip in Bruce's collar.

"Take it to Horoson, Bruce," he bade the collie. "Then you can come back here if you like."

The dog trotted p r o u d l y and mincingly upon his mission. Ethan grinned in fond amusement at him as he went.

"My housekeeper wanted to know if I'm dining at home this evening," he told Carter. "I suppose she didn't dare interrupt me at my work by coming here to ask. So she sent the only member of the household that can interrupt me as often as he wants to. Shrewd woman! What's that pile of stuff you're sorting?" he asked, watching Moylan Carter's handling of a

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sheaf of letters and papers he had taken from one side of the desk.

"The C. G. & X. layout, sir. You told me you wanted it all docketed and an abstract on it, before you left. I'll have to hurry if it's to be finished in time. The—"

'It would rend my great tender heart to be the guilty cause of your hurrying, Carter. But I've special reason for wanting that C. G. & X. matter set in motion before I go. In fact, that's one of the two reasons why I'm resigned to going at all. The first and chief reason I'm willing to go is because a month in the hills away from civilization and motor cars, is going to be a grand treat for Bruce.

"Geoghan tells me a collie is as out of place in a big city—even a city as big as Granite here—as a hawk in a canary cage. Geoghan says collies are happiest when they have hills to gallop over and forests to range through. Says that's their natural element.

"No, Geoghan didn't say 'natural element,'" Brock corrected himself. "Chauffeurs don't talk like Harvard men who are trying to patronize the rest of mankind—no offense to *you*, Carter—and Geoghan's precise words, as close as I recall them, were: 'That's up their street.'

"So, the main reason I'm going to throw away a month's moneymaking and keep a mob of financiers and speculators waiting for my next move in C. G. & X. and boring myself by going back to nature—dreary old Mother Nature!—is to give Bruce a month of jolly wilderness life. He— Hello, Brucie!" he broke off, as the collie sauntered into the room again. "I was just talking about you, old friend."

The collie came up to him, with none of the mincing pride of a few minutes earlier. His message-carrying was completed. Once more he was his stately self. He thrust his cold nose into his master's cupped hand; then laid his chin on Brock's wizened knee, looking up into the tired old face with a calm equality of chumship. Ethan rumpled the dog's furry ears and scratched him under the chin. Then he pushed aside the questing nostrils, saying with a dry laugh:

"No, Bruce. I haven't got any animal crackers in my pocket to-day. Maybe Carter has. Ask him."

Gravely, the dog strolled over to where the secretary sat. He put his long muzzle under Carter's forearm and thrust his head sharply upward. The joggling gesture knocked the man's busily plying fountain pen to the floor. As Carter stooped to pick it up, Brock said:

"Bruce likes you. He likes you, much. He likes you a good deal better than he likes Geoghan or any one else around here, except me. I wonder why."

Moylan Carter looked up again from his work; saying modestly:

"I've heard that dogs know by instinct what humans are to be trusted."

"Rot!" snorted Brock. "Governor Baxter, of Maine, sent his chum collie to live in a state penitentiary as a pal for the prisoners. Out of all those hundreds of convicts there must have been at least one or two who weren't saints or even wholly trustworthy. Yet the dog made friends with the lot of them. Is a dog wiser than a human? You and I can't tell by instinct whether a man is to be trusted or isn't. How can a dog? He can't. Bruce happens to like you.

"Once, forty years ago, I liked a man who later robbed me of every cent I had. Bruce doesn't care for Geoghan. Just as once I didn't care for a man

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who later saved me from bankruptcy. I trust none of my fellow-bipeds. But I come nearer to trusting Geoghan than any one else. I've proved him—for my own amusement—in fifty different ways. That chauffeur of mine comes close to being a *man*. And he loves Bruce. Yet Bruce has no special use for him. That is because Bruce is no wiser than we humans are. He likes you—because he likes you. Just as he has chosen me for his god, because he has chosen me for his god. That's all there is to it."

CARTER shut his lips tightly, to force back an obvious retort. He bent low over the papers he was docketing. Old Ethan Brock eyed him approvingly.

"You have your temper and your tongue well in hand, Carter," he said. "Now let's come to the other reason why I don't look on this month of exile with a one hundred per cent distaste. That reason is the C. G. & X."

Carter turned toward his chief in genuine curiosity.

"I don't understand," he said.

"If you had studied that mass of papers and letters and schedules and wires, instead of just codifying it," suggested Brock, "and if you had profited by a tenth of what you ought to have learned from me during the past three years, you would understand every atom of what I have in mind. Or if you bothered to read the financial pages in the newspapers."

"I read—"

"But you don't digest. If you did, you'd know the quarterly meeting of the C. G. & X. directors is just thirty-three days off. The day after I'm due to come back from camp. You would know that the operators and the rest are not only spraining their brains to guess whether or not the merger is going through, but that they're worrying over the persistent rumor—I started the rumor, by the way, and I kept it going—that C. G. & X. is going to pass its dividends for the first time in eleven years."

"I—"

"The answer to either of those questions would have an important effect on the road's stock, on the Exchange. And I'm the only one who can give that answer or even a hint of it. And I'm going to clear out for a whole month. Get the point, now? See why it amuses me to think of the squirmings and the guesses as to what I'm going to tell my dummies to do at the directors' meeting? The directors themselves don't know. They won't know till I tell them. That's why I picked them as directors.

"It would be funny, wouldn't it," he went on whimsically, "if I should decide not to get back to Granite in time for the quarterly meeting? Belknap and his crowd would be able to stampede the dummies. That would mean a crazy boom of the stock; and the right men would get rich overnight. The merger—"

"But would they dare?"

"Not if I'm here. And I'm going to be here. It's a way I've got. Even if I were taken sick up in camp, I could get word to my own men, through Griggs, to vote my way on the dividend and to swing the merger for me. So if you're planning to put any unsparable cash into margins, on a guess, I advise you to lay off. If I'm alive, the board's majority are going to vote as I want them to. They don't know yet how I want them to vote, any more than you do. But they'll know when they come to the meeting; even if *you* won't. I—"

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"It a matter of no interest to me," interposed Carter, stiffly. "I don't speculate."

"No? Neither does Bruce. That's why you're both reasonably sure of your next meal. Come along, Brucie, and let's look over that ton of fishing tackle the Firth & Garrange people sent me from New York. Not that we're likely to use any of the silly stuff. Lord, but it's a tragedy for a man of my age to have a vacation and then not have the barest idea what to do with it!"

CHAPTER II.

NEW YOUTH.

GUSEPPLE LAKE was a scanty thirty miles from the city of Granite. Yet, to all intents and purposes, it might well have been ten times as far away. It was as primitive as it had been in Colonial days. Quite as primitive—but more painstakingly so—was the Vandam Charles camp.

Up a bumpy trail to the camp, a limousine wobbled and rocked. At the wheel was Brock's chauffeur, Geoghan. Sitting in conscious state on the seat beside him, Bruce surveyed the wild landscape with a keen interest. His sensitive nostrils pulsed to the myriad forest smells. The big dog was in his element.

Crumpled sulkily in the rear seat, Ethan Brock surveyed with glum disfavor the wilderness about him. He shivered a little at the ice-tinge in the mountain air.

A grimly dignified man of perhaps sixty sat beside Ethan. This was Paul Griggs, his attorney and chief aide. The two had been talking strenuously and fast during the thirty-mile ride from Granite; Brock reiterating a series of commands whose scope was Napoleonic; Griggs nodding comprehension and jotting down an occasional note. As the car lurched to a halt at the rough-hewn doorway of the camp's main dwelling, Brock was visibly annoyed at the enforced ending of the conference.

"Well," he grumbled, "there are a mort of things yet to be cleared up. And, besides, there's the matter of the proxies. I'll have Geoghan drive up here for me a week from to-day and take me back to cinch the last details. Be at my house at eleven, sharp. I won't lose more than half a day of my wretched vacation, by the trip; I'm sorry to say. And the doctors needn't know I played truant. Good-by."

Two of the camp employees carried his luggage indoors. Brock stood staring at the receding car as it bumped away in the twilight, carrying the only two men on earth for whom he had the slightest regard or trust; his chauffeur and his attorney, in the order named. Ethan was aware of a queer loneliness. Then a cold nose was thrust into his cupped palm. He looked down to see Bruce, vibrant with joyous eagerness.

"The pleasure is all yours, Brucie," he said, ungraciously. "Now, let's go inside and explore this hundred-thousand-dollar log shack. Why did I ever come to such a dump, anyhow? I haven't been in the country, for even a night, since I was sixteen. I'm going to hate it."

The Japanese house-servant's really creditable dinner of broiled trout and other de luxe wilderness fare did little to lift the old man's gloom. He was kept awake for hours thereafter by the choir of katydids and treetoads and whippoorwills; he who was wont to sleep undisturbed amid the clangor of a city.

Bruce added his share to his master's

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insomnia by snoring lustily on his bedside mat and then by barking with much gay vigor at an owl whose wings winnowed eerily on its flight past the bedroom's open windows.

IT was late when at last Ethan Brock dozed. And it was not yet sunrise when he awoke. By all precedents, the old man should have come to his senses in a raging temper from his bad night. Instead, he lay blinking drowzily about him; too drugged, for the moment, by the rarefied balsam air to remember where he was.

He saw the tree branches pressing close to the wide windows and the paling sky and a flash of silver-laden water through the mist beyond. Above his head were the elaborately primitive rafters of the bedroom's ceiling. As he took in his surroundings, memory played an odd trick on the tired old brain.

Yes, it was daylight. His vacation had just begun. He had come to the farm the evening before; the evening after school closed for the summer. For two whole months there would be no studying of lessons. There would be not a thing to do but fish—the sport he loved best—and to loaf around in the woods. And here he was wasting his precious playtime, in bed!

Laughing from sheer boyish happiness he swung out of bed and to the floor.

But at his first vigorous bound from under the covers, recollection and reality came rushing back upon him. Not alone from wider wakefulness, but because every one of his age-stiffened joints cried out in protest at the sudden motion.

He stood swaying beside the bed, clutching at a chair to regain his balance. The boyishly happy laugh died on his lips, leaving his face grayer and older and more deeply lined than ever. He knew well, now, where he was and who he was. The knowledge brought him far keener pain than had the wrenching of his stiff joints.

Yet, far down in his heart, there was still the illogically glad feeling of adventure that had been his a moment earlier. He did not understand it. He did not want to understand it. But he vowed he would profit by it before it should fade.

Bruce had jumped up, jubilant and alert, sensing, as ever, his master's mood. The dog ran over to the bedroom door; then invitingly back to Ethan. Brock rumpled the collie's ears and began to draw on his own clothes. He dressed with a haste bred of more than the stark chill of the mountain dawn.

"Patience, Brucie!" he exhorted the dog. "I'm not as lucky as you are. I can't start off in the same clothes I slept in. But we *are* starting. I don't know where. And it doesn't matter. We'll adventure, you and I; and we'll try to get into mischief. All ready. Come on!"

Noiselessly, Brock led the way out of the bedroom and across the raftered main hall, and let himself out of the front door. Noiselessly, Bruce danced along beside him. As they stepped out onto the rustic veranda Ethan became aware of the reason for his own soundless progress. He found he had thrown back to a long forgotten boyhood habit; and was carrying his boots in his hand.

This he discovered when he brought his stockinged toe into sharp contact with the screen door's jamb. Again he grinned, if a trifle sheepishly, and sat down on the steps to draw on his footgear. The petty incident tickled him.

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He did not know his usual austerely sour self in this resurrected guise of youth. Yet, again, he had an illogical sense of gaiety that was for nearly a half-century alien to him.

"AND now, Brucie," he announced, "we're going fishing, you and I. Ever been fishing? Grand sport, Bruce, though I'd forgotten it was. There's the boat house down there. Where there's a boat house there are boats; and maybe there's fishing tackle, too. No harm in finding out. I'm not going back into the house for my own rods and wake every one up; and have a pair of obsequious guides spoiling our fun. Hurry up, before they catch us!"

As ever, the lonely old man talked to his dog as to a fellow-human. This after the custom of thousands of other lonely men, though Brock did not know it. Well did he realize that the collie could not understand one spoken word in ten. But it was a pleasure, just the same, to talk to him. And always Bruce responded to the tone and to the mood, even if not to the actual language.

To the ornately primitive boat house they made their way; as the curls of lake mist began to rise eerily from the water at the approach of the sun and at the breath of the dawn wind. The lake was still as smooth as melted silver beneath its dissolving cloak of white vapor. Ghostily the tall evergreens stood guard over it. The air had a bite. But it had, too, a tang that went to the head. Ethan Brock forgot to shiver as he suck great gulps of the balsam-tinged atmosphere into his lungs.

"Bruce," he said, "breakfast is always a thing of horror to me. You know that. Because I always give you most of mine. But this morning, when we get back, breakfast is going to taste like *food*. Not like predigested hay. I wish I had told that Jap to give me a five-pound steak, all sprinkled with chops, Brucie, and maybe a bare half dozen eggs or so as a side dish. Eggs with a two-pound sliver of ham to make them more palatable. And perhaps just a few fish. We—"

He stopped, with a grunt of disappointment, in front of the boat house. A gleaming new padlock held shut its single huge door. The gates of the piscatorial paradise were slammed in the questing pilgrim's face. Then, of a sudden, Ethan Brock's clouded face cleared.

Some twenty feet away a cranky little old boat was half in and half out of water. A bedraggled little apology for a boat; presumably deemed unfit for shelter with the lordly boat house's aristocratic craft. Such a disreputable and unreliable old tub as might belong to the children of one of the guides. Such a boat as had lain on the pond-edge at the foot of the farm's orchard; where a boy named Ethan Brock had fished, nearly fifty years earlier.

Recollection of the careless ways of boy fishermen sent Brock toward the tub at a rheumatic trot. If only—! Yes, by all that was sublimely lucky, there it was. Lying carelessly across the gunwale was a spliced and battered half-length bamboo pole. Not a rod. A pole. And, dangling from it was a thick old fifteen-foot line; with a rusty hook on its end. Yes—again showing that boys had not changed since Ethan's youth—and in the leaky craft's leaky bottom reclined three very dead minnows.

Feverishly the old man shoved the tub into the lake. Feverishly, yet cautiously, he boarded the eccentric thing; pulling the splintered oars from under

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the seat. With shaky fingers he dug the hook into the gills of the shiniest minnow.

"All set!" he babbled to his collie. "Get aboard, Brucie! Steady, there! Don't upset us. Now lie down. Not there. Amidships. Try to trim boat. And keep still. One sidewise move, and this wreck will turn turtle. Know the difference between a fish-pole and a fishing-rod, Brucie? A rod is what a city chap holds over the water. A pole is what a country boy catches fish with. This thing here is a pole. *We're off!*"

HE bent to the chipped oars, clumsily manipulating the boat out from shore into the swirling mists of the lake. There he threw his baited line astern.

"This rheumatic wrist of mine isn't up to casting, Bruce," he explained to the happily excited collie, as he began again to row, paralleling the shore. "And there's no swivel for trolling. And I'm not going to insult either of us by 'still fishing.' (Besides, the minnow's too dead.) So we're going to skitter. Lots of good fish caught by skittering, Bruce, if you know the trick. Especially when it's dawn and there's mist on the water. We—"

He gasped, and lunged forward. The pole butt had shot from its brace under his heel, and was disappearing over the stern. By some minor miracle, the gnarled fingers seized upon it, as it was about to follow the rest of the pole into the lake. Seized, and clung hard. The fifteen feet of cheap line was as taut as a bowstring. Instinctively, Ethan Brock reversed the pole, halfway, to give the fish a chance to fight against whatever slight resilience it might have. It was then that the tense old face relaxed into a smile of triumph.

"Lie down, Bruce!" Brock exhorted the collie which had scrambled to his feet in wild excitement. "Want to capsize us just as we've made our strike? This is a whale we've got. A reg'lar ol' he-one. And it was grand luck that the pole went out so far before I caught it. Gave him just time enough to bolt the minnow and get snubbed."

As he spoke, Brock was doing a really creditable bit of playing of his prize. He knew his pole was all but non-resilient and that his much-used line was wholly unreliable. But he also knew he had on his hook a fish of more than fairish size. He renewed unconsciously his childhood knack of handling such a situation.

Slowly, with infinite care, he pulled in, hand over hand, ever and again giving the struggling fish enough leeway to ease the heavier part of the line's tug; taking advantage of every inch he could gain.

The collie lay obedient in the bottom of the boat, yet trembling with the echo of his master's rare excitement. The sun butted its rim over the mountain-crest. At the same instant the fish broke water, rising high in the air, its curved body shining and distinct in every line.

"Small-mouth bass!" babbled Ethan to his thrilled collie as the fish crashed back into the water. "Four pounds if it's an ounce. And he didn't shake the hook free, either, Brucie. That was his game. He—"

The fight left him no further scope for words. Panting, weary, dizzy, Brock continued right skillfully to play his catch. Bit by bit, with intervening rushes for freedom—rushes which grew feebler as the minutes sped—the bass was brought alongside. A twitch of the line, aided by impromptu land-

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ing-net tactics from Ethan's hat; and the bass came over the side and into the boat's awash bottom.

Still securely hooked, the fish fell full onto the back of the couchant Bruce. This rude and wriggling impact was too much for the collie's recollection of the order to lie down. Indignantly, Bruce leaped to his feet and far to one side. Ethan was still leaning far to that same side.

The cranky tub proceeded to turn turtle.

INTO the ice-chill waters of the mountain lake tumbled man and dog; Ethan continuing to clutch like grim death at the slimy line.

Instantly, the two heads bobbed to the surface. Instantly, Bruce struck out for the sputtering man, and seized him by the collar. But Ethan would not have it so.

"Let go, you fuzzy idiot!" he commanded, coughing and treading water. "I could swim before you were born. Give me sea-room! Let go!"

Gripping the line in his teeth and with the pole floating at one side of him and the fish flapping wildly over his other shoulder, Brock struck out for the fifty-foot-distant shore.

As a lad he had been a notable swimmer. And swimming is one form of exercise whose practice is never forgotten. Easily and fast Ethan swam the few intervening yards between the upset boat and the bank.

Down from the camp two guides were running, at top speed; casting off their coats as they came. The foremost of them splashed out into kneedeep water, just as Ethan Brock felt bottom under his feet; and as Bruce reached dry ground.

"Stay where you are!" gurgled Ethan, waving back the guides, as he made his way shoreward to them. "I'm all right. I won a medal for swimming before your fathers were born. One of you take this fish. So. Have it weighed; and then tell the Jap I want it for my breakfast—along with whatever other food he's got. One of you go up and take an armful of crash towels to my room. Say I'll be ready for breakfast in twenty minutes. Good and ready for it, at that."

By all medical precedent, Ethan Brock was due for an attack of double pneumonia, or at the very least for a month of agonizing inflammatory rheumatism accompanied by heart-strain and shock as a result of his plunge into ice cold water on a chilly morning, at the age of sixty-two and in a run-down physical condition. But ten minutes of harsh rubdown and dry clothes sent him to breakfast in a glow he had not known for years, and with a ravenous appetite. Nor was he a penny the worse for his ducking, then or later. This a little to his own amazement and greatly to his secret pride.

So began a wonder-time, for Brock and his dog, high up in the wilderness. Brock spent his days in fishing and in tramping the woods and lazing in the sun. His nights were passed in such dreamless and dead sleep as had not been his since he began to earn his living. The man seemed to grow younger daily.

The torn nerves quieted, the long-lost appetite had returned with a rush; the months of insomnia were forgotten. Nature was cradling and soothing and healing her prodigal son, in nature's own immemorial way. Ethan Brock marveled at himself. But Ethan Brock rejoiced. For the first occasion within his memory, he was having a good time. And he reveled vastly in it.

To a younger and livelier holiday-

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seeker his routine at the camp might have seemed tame. To Ethan it was pure delight, every minute of it. His daily hours of solemn fishing, his brief morning swim, his leisurely rambles through the nearer forest trails—always with Bruce as a rapturously happy comrade—these were things of utter joy for Brock; things to renew his forgotten youth for him; things to give him a glad vigor and zest for life that he had not known for many a bleak year.

CHAPTER III.

THE AMBUSH.

IN fact, Ethan was childishly annoyed when, a week later, his chauffeur, Geoghan, appeared with a huge limousine to fetch him back to Granite for the conference he had arranged with Griggs. Brock had looked forward to this half-day of business, when he made the appointment, as a welcome break in his month of dreary exile. Now he swore at himself for having made it. He grudged every hour of absence from camp.

"What are you g r i n n i n g at, Geoghan?" he demanded peevishly, as the chauffeur ran up the porch steps to guide him down into the car.

"Sorry, sir," said Geoghan. "I didn't know I was grinning. I—I was kind of tickled to see you looking so perky and well-like. You're looking like another man, just in this one week, if you'll let me make so bold as to say so, sir."

"Geoghan," rasped Brock, "next to Bruce, you come nearer being human than any one I know. Like the way I look, eh? And you care enough about the Old Grouch to grin because he's getting well? I'd figure any other man was lying, if he said that to me. Maybe you're lying, too, for all I know. But I doubt it. Somehow I doubt it."

"Yes, sir," said Geoghan, helping Brock into the car; then adding as he looked around him: "Where's the big dog, sir? Isn't he coming along?"

"No," returned Ethan, "he is not. Just because I have to spend half a priceless day in the rackety, smelly city, it's no reason why I should penalize Bruce. I shut him in my room, just now; and I told the Jap to let him out five minutes after we're gone. He can have his swim and his ramble in the forest, even if I can't."

In a little more than an hour and a half, the car halted under the porte cochère of Ethan Brock's mausoleum-like house in Granite. The butler was at the door as the limousine slowed to a stop. So was Brock's secretary, young Moylan Carter. Ethan favored them with a nod as he mounted the veranda steps. Then to Geoghan he said:

"Drive over to Judge Griggs's office and tell him I'm here and ready for him. Bring him back with you. He—"

The rasping old voice trailed away. His keen old eyes focused on something that was turning into the drive, fifty yards distant. The "something" was a galloping collie, dust streaked and panting.

"Bruce!" babbled Geoghan.

"Bruce!" echoed Ethan Brock, as the dog cantered eagerly up to him. "Bruce, you old blackguard! How did you ever get here? I left you shut up in my room at camp. How—?"

"Begging pardon, sir," ventured Geoghan, "you said you told the Jap to let him out in five minutes. That explains it."

"Explains what? Do you mean to say he trailed us here?"

"He trailed *you*, sir. There's many

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a dog than can follow the scent of his own master's car. He caught that scent. We had to drive terrible slow, you'll remember, sir, over that bum road. It gave him a chance to get here just behind us. But he must have pretty near run his legs off, to do it in this time. Good old Bruce!"

"Miraculous old Bruce!" corrected Brock. "Why, there's nothing that a dog can't do, Geoghan! Every day he gives me some new surprise, in the way of cleverness—and—and loyalty. Ran thirty miles, away from the woods he loves. Just to be where *I* am. He—Hurry over to Judge Griggs's," he commanded, angry at his own rare show of emotion.

"Carter, have you got everything ready for us, in my study? Prowse," he continued, to the butler, "bring Judge Griggs to my study as soon as he gets here. Meantime, have some water brought for Bruce. The old fellow must be half dead with thirst after that hot run. Have it sent up to my study. Come along, Carter. Bruce, when we go back to camp, this afternoon, you won't have to run. You'll ride. Like the gentleman you are. Come to the study and rest."

AND so the golden month of camp life wore itself toward a close. Master and dog were out of doors practically all the time. Stronger and stouter grew frail old Ethan. His appetite continued. His raw nerves were healed. His insomnia was gone. He smiled in tolerant self-contempt as he found himself counting wistfully the bare handful of days that remained before he must leave all this and return to Granite for his historic C. G. & X. battle.

Late on the afternoon of the day before he was due to return to Granite, Ethan set off on a farewell ramble along his best loved forest trail; the trail he traversed always at least once a day. It was a path artistically laid out and winding in picturesque fashion through leafy walls so dense as to seem impenetrable; with here and there a charming vista that ended in a background of mountain or of lake. The trail was a veritable triumph of the landscaper's art. Vandam Charles had been proud of it.

To-day, as man and dog padded along the carpet of evergreen needles side by side the solemn hush of the forest was split by a hideous noise of spitting and snarling and caterwauling; in brief, the din of a right lively cat-fight. It came, evidently, from some point on the trail beyond the next bend.

No normal dog could resist such a lure. Assuredly, Bruce could not. With a gleeful challenge bark he bolted forward at express-train speed, vanishing from sight around the wide curve before Ethan could voice a recall. Then Brock bawled after him:

"Come back, you fool! You'll only get your nose scratched. Back!"

As he called, Ethan heard the invisible collie break into a roar of fury that had something baffled and astounded in its timbre. A dog does not make that sound when he is breaking up a cat-fight and sending its participants scuttling up the nearest trees. Brock forced himself into stiffly rapid motion.

He rounded the curve to find no sign of the collie. The green walls that lined the path were still swaying violently at one point. On the needle-strewn trail, just there, the soft loam disclosed the marks of several moccasined human feet; interspersed with streaks such as might well be made by the claws of a struggling dog.

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Ethan Brock was scarcely aware of this sign of strife, before the close-set evergreens on either side of the path were parted. Silently, two men stepped out into the open, one at Brock's right and one at his left. A third man slipped into the trail from behind. A fourth appeared from around the bend directly in front.

Their moccasins made no noise on the soft ground. The men were roughly clad and were hatless. Across the entire face of each of them a close-fitting white handkerchief mask was fastened. Two small eyelets were the masks' only openings. Through these ill-discerned eyes glinted non-committally.

"Bruce!" shouted Ethan Brock, his hand diving toward the left breast pocket of his coat.

From somewhere came again that baffled roar and a thrashing about in the undergrowth. But the collie did not appear.

BEFORE Brock's stiff fingers could travel two inches toward the little automatic pistol he always carried in his left inner coat pocket, the man nearest him had thrust forward one arm, with the speed of light; and had caught Ethan's right wrist. The man on the other side seized his left wrist with the same speed and deftness.

In the same set of motions the man who first had seized him ran an expert hand into the coat front and, with the smooth skill of a pickpocket, drew forth Ethan's automatic.

There was no hint of roughness in either of the assailants' actions. Indeed, they were gentleness itself; exerting only enough strength to prevent Brock from struggling for the pistol. As soon as he had been relieved of the weapon, they let go and stepped almost respectfully back from him.

Ethan peered from one to another of the four masked strangers, his leathery face as void of expression as their own white masks, except that his piercing black eyes blazed like a striking snake's.

He was as thoroughly self-possessed as when he fought some intricately perilous financial battle.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, his dry tone as expressionlessly calm as his visage, "I infer this is a kidnaping."

None of the men spoke or moved.

"I infer it," resumed the dry old voice, speaking without the faintest trace of emotion or even of ordinary interest in the theme, "I infer it is a kidnaping and not a hold-up. Because you must know I am likely to have money on me; and you have made no move to get it. It would have been quite as simple as to steal my pistol.

"Also, because you handled me with an exaggerated tenderness instead of yanking me about. I infer you want to keep me unhurt, if you can. Yes," he finished his deductions, reflectively, "it must be a case of kidnaping. Besides, the small amount of cash I carry in my clothes out here in the woods isn't worth splitting four ways."

Still there was no answer. Mutely, the four men stood on all sides of him, as though waiting for something or for some one. Noting this afresh, Ethan resumed his dryly voiced chain of inference:

"I take it you are waiting for your leader or chief or boss or main guy or The Works—or whatever is the newest title for the head of an enterprise like this. I infer also that it is he—alone or with some one's help—who kidnaped my dog. Clever work, that. Not brilliant, of course. Brilliancy is not

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to be expected among lawbreaking morons. But mildly clever, in its way.

"The imitation—by a machine or by a good mimic—of a cat-fight; then the net or whatever else was held here in readiness for the collie to run into as he came around the bend; the weeks of studying my habits which taught you I walk here late every afternoon; the watching for me to set out from camp to-day; the—"

He ceased his drawled surmises and turned with polite interest to the wall of green, close beside him. There was a light rustling. Then out into the path noiselessly stepped a fifth masked man.

He inclined his head slightly to Ethan, saying as he did so:

"Mr. Brock, I hope my friends have not frightened you unduly or hurt you in any way."

"Mr. Kidnaper," rejoined Ethan, "I hope you have not been any rougher with my dog than your dogs here have been with me."

"Your dog is not hurt, sir," said the man, a tinge of approval in his suave tones at the oldster's contemptuous calm. "He ran headlong into the net. We wrapped him into it and slipped a muzzle over those very energetic jaws of his. Then we carried him away. Not far. Just to leave the scene clear for the—"

"The kidnaping?" finished Ethan. "I see. Thanks for not harming him. It shall be remembered in your favor when I get you all by the heels. It may even shorten your sentence by a year or so; if I have any influence with the courts. Which I have. You see, the dog is dear to me. He alone. And now shall we get down to business? I know perfectly well what you want. I was practically certain of it as soon as I saw these Carnival Ball ruffians of yours. I was wholly sure, as soon as you spoke."

THE men moved slightly, glancing at one another.

"You poor blundering crooks always leave the right thing undone," pursued Brock. "You took much pains to cover up your faces. But you left your hands naked. That was an error. I study hands much more closely than I study faces and I have profited much thereby, during the past few decades or more. Humans often can assume poker faces, but few of them have the wit to assume poker fingers.

"A man may have the face of sublime innocence. But when he tells me a lie, or when he is startled or excited, his hands tend to clench. Quite so. I note you're all relaxing your fingers very sheepishly. Also there is much to be learned of a man's position in the world, from the various inklings afforded by his hands. If one has learned the key to it all, as I have."

He darted his fiery black eyes from one to another of his captors. Two of them thrust their hands behind their backs.

"Too late!" Ethan told them. almost apologetically. "I've made my observations. None of you men belong to what is known as 'the criminal classes.' You are criminals of a far higher order. You would not even call yourselves professional crooks. Your type of lawbreaker is probed less often by a police court judge than by a Senate committee."

"I am afraid we must hurry," interposed the fifth man, his voice as suave as ever; yet, Brock noted, with a shade less assurance in it than when last he had spoken. "If you will pardon me—"

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"One moment, please," protested Ethan. "Whether we hurry or not to the place you plan to hide me depends somewhat on your acceptance of my one condition. I will be brief. Besides, nobody is coming. Your lookouts would warn you in ample time. You do not plan to murder me. That would be too dangerous. As for holding me for ransom—well, you or those you work for have a thorough knowledge of my character.

"You—or they—know that I do not value my life. You—or they—know that if I were held for ransom, I should let myself be tortured to death sooner than authorize my associates to pay one penny. Only one thing remains, as your motive. It took me scarcely a minute to work out the very silly problem.

"You are taking me somewhere to hold me *incomunicado*—you know what *incomunicado* means, especially your shortest mummer, you with the typical Andalusian hands—to hold me in that way until well after the quarterly meeting of the C. G. & X., two days from now."

He turned with modest pride toward the only masked man who had spoken.

"I see your hands are tight shut," said Ethan. "They snapped shut like a trap's jaws when I spoke of the C. G. & X. Really you are a very uncontrolled scoundrel. You should learn to keep a better hold on your nerves. But let that go. You people—or your employers—know that if I don't appear there, if I send no word, no instructions, Mr. Belknap and his clique will be able to swing the meeting and block my merger project; and force a payment or a passing of dividend, whichever way they have planned to manipulate the market.

"They can vote the several changes I have been opposing, too. On second thought, they are planning to vote the dividend. That will rocket the stock and they can make their killing. Then they can hop onto the other side of the market and get ready to ride down the slump that is due to follow the news that I have disappeared and that I am not likely to come back.

"They'll start that rumor at the right time; just as they'll keep it mum until after the quarterly meeting. By the time you get word to turn me loose, they will have milked the possibilities dry and they will be so heavy with cash that they won't be able to walk. And the road I have spent my life in building up will be a wreck.

"Thugs and underworlders would not understand the jargon I've been talking," he finished. "But I see—chiefly again from your hands—that you men followed every detail of it. Now then—where are you taking me? It's getting dark and the night air does things to my rheumatism."

"We are taking you where you will be made comfortable in every way, Mr. Brock," said the spokesman, his smooth voice now abrim with unconcealable worry. "And I am glad you are wise enough to come with us willingly. We—"

"Who said I would come with you willingly?" demanded Ethan. "That's the thing I am making a condition on. Accept the condition and I promise to go quietly. Refuse it, and you'll drag me by force; fighting every step of the way. A struggle is not the best thing for my shaky heart. And you may well have a corpse to hang for, instead of a prisoner to go to jail for. The condition is this: Wherever you take me, I want my dog to go along. I am never lonely when he is with me. I'll order him not to attack you, and he will obey

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me. Well, does Bruce share my prison?"

"Certainly, sir," assented the spokesman, in evident relief that the condition was so light. "I'll bring him to you at once. Then, I must ask you to let me blindfold you. We'll take off the bandage as soon as we get to where we're going. One of us will lead you on either side until we come to the car."

HE disappeared into the woods. In less than a minute he was back again, carrying in his arms with much difficulty a raging and squirming collie, which snapped impotently with muzzled jaws at every part of his captor's body that came within reach. The man set him down beside Ethan. Bruce flung himself at the nearest masked man.

"Down, B r u c i e !" commanded Ethan. "Let them alone. Let them *alone,* I said!"

Instantly, yet with strong reluctance, the collie desisted from his futile effort to dig his teeth into his victim. With a look of worry in his deep-set eyes he ranged alongside his master, staring up into the expressionless old face as if for a clew to this puzzling turn of events.

Again, at Ethan's order, the dog forbore to interfere when the spokesman gently blindfolded Brock and when a man on either side proceeded to lead him off the trail and into the deeper woods.

Ten minutes of necessarily slow walking brought Ethan's feet into contact with a rutted woodroad. He was lifted to the rear seat of a car; Bruce springing in and sitting beside him. The car bumped and reeled and joggled along, at a snail's pace, for nearly half an hour.

Then it halted. Ethan was lifted out, and led for perhaps another hundred yards. He was guided up a flight of steps and across a narrow porch and in through a front doorway and down a somewhat long hall. Thence he was led through yet another doorway; and a door was closed behind him. The bandage was taken from his eyes.

Blinking about him the old man took in his surroundings. Had he been a frequenter of the movies he might well have expected to find himself in a tumbledown shack at a river's edge or in a gloomy cellar with chain-rings in the walls. He was in no such melodramatic place.

Instead he stood in the middle of a largish room, furnished in elaborately rustic fashion. A camp living room of sorts; also available as a bedchamber, judging by the spacious camp couch and by a chest of drawers. Through a half-open door Brock had a glimpse of a well-appointed bathroom.

Past doubt, this place was the little fishing-and-shooting lodge of some well-to-do man from Granite. Past doubt, also—for it would be ridiculously easy, later, for any searchers to find and identify it—Ethan's kidnapers had commandeered its use; in the absence of whoever might own it and without his knowledge.

Bruce was straying about the room, sniffing and exploring. Ethan's gaze shifted toward the three windows. All were open. But all were rendered impassable by reason of strong outside shutters, tightly barred. Darkness had fallen. But bracketed oil lamps made the room cheery. The spokesman broke the brief silence.

"I hope you will be comfortable here, Mr. Brock," he said. "It is not as rusticly sumptuous as the Charles camp. But it was the best we could

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get. Dinner will be brought in here to you whenever you're ready. We found plenty of clean bed linen in the presses, but no pyjamas. So I put an extra pair of my own on your pillows, over there. I hope they will come near enough to fitting you.

"If you care to read, there are several books on that shelf. If you care to write, I see there is a scratchpad on the desk. I'll lend you my own fountain pen, if you haven't one. I suggest you don't try to get out through the windows. The shutters are fastened, and two of us will be on guard out there all night. Another of us will be just outside this room. Rap on the door whenever you want anything. And let me know what time you'd like breakfast."

He and the men who had entered with him filed out. When one of them came back soon afterward carrying the laden dinner tray, old Ethan was slumped low in front of the hearth fire, his tired feet to the blaze, his head sunk drowsily on his chest. Bruce sprawled on the hearth beside him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MESSAGE.

"I SUPPOSE you know," remarked Ethan, as the man arranged the meal on the center table, "I suppose you know you poor novices haven't a chance to escape prison for this abduction? You would be much wiser, for your own sakes, to kill me out of hand. There is where you would have some slight chance against me. But when you pit your puny intellects against mine, as you're doing—well, there can be only one outcome to it. Tell the others what I say."

The man made no reply. He continued laying the dinner; then withdrew. Nor did he speak when he came back for the tray, after Ethan had finished with it.

Apparently the hearty meal took away Brock's earlier fatigue and even stirred him to activity, for he seated himself at the desk, drawing his fountain pen from his waistcoat pocket, and pulled the large scratchpad toward him. Instantly he began to scribble.

Twice during the evening one or another of the white-masked men looked in, ostensibly to replenish the hearth fire. Neither time did Brock so much as raise his head to look at them. He continued to write concentratedly, rapidly. For three full hours he toiled thus.

Somewhat after m i d n i g h t he pounded crossly at the door. At once the man on guard outside opened it. In his captor's ill-fitting white pyjamas Ethan faced him. Bruce was dancing about in stark excitement.

"Here!" fumed Brock. "Let out this dog of mine, for a while, won't you? He's smelled a cat or a rabbit, out there, and he keeps waking me to let him get after it. How can I sleep when he—"

He broke off with a grunt, as the big collie dashed along the passageway and into the darkness beyond.

"If I'd known he was going to make a crazy fool of himself all night," grunted Ethan, "I wouldn't have asked you amateur criminals to let me have him in here with me. I'm old. And I need my sleep. He'll scratch at the front door, or at this door, if the front door is open, when he wants to come back. When he does, for Heaven's sake let him in. If you don't he'll bark outside my window till daylight. Then none of us will get any sleep."

Grumbling, muttering in senile

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fashion, Ethan pottered back to bed, blowing out the lamp on the stand, and crawling rheumatically in between the sheets. The guard shut the door and locked it.

Just after sunrise the spokesman came softly into the room. Ethan was lying on his back, his leathery mouth ajar. He was snoring. The man stood on the threshold, hesitating to wake him.

As he debated, Brock opened his eyes and looked at him. The old man did not stare about, after the manner of the newly-awakened in a strange place. His faculties were as alert as though he had not slept at all.

"OH, good morning, Mr. First Conspirator!" he hailed the masker, in sardonic goodfellowship. "I was afraid it was one of your temporarily deaf-mute friends. I'm glad it's the one member of the absurd gang who has been chosen to do all the talking. How soon can I eat?"

"Whenever you like, sir," said the spokesman, adding in genuine wonder, "but would you mind telling me how you knew it is I and not one of the others? We're all about of a size. And our clothes and our masks are identical. How did you know—?"

"By your hands, of course," grinned Brock. "I told you it had been my hobby—a mighty profitable one, at that—for the past forty-odd years, to make a study of hands, rather than faces. Well, I studied your hands rather closely, yesterday. I would recognize them anywhere. I shall be quite ready to swear to them, in court; or in any lineup of crooks."

The man's fingers clenched, instinctively. Then he put his hands behind his back and proceeded with the errand which had brought him to the room.

"I would not have had you waked so early, sir," he said, uncomfortably, "but your dog has not come back yet. I was standing in the front doorway when he went galloping past me late last night just as I heard you tell the man at your own door to let him out. You said he would be back soon and you asked to have him let in.

"An hour or so ago, when he hadn't gotten back, I sent two men to look through the woods for him. I thought he might have been caught in some fox-trap. But they couldn't find a trace of him. Not even when they skirted the Charles camp buildings. We thought he might have gone back there. But he hadn't. I—I didn't want you to think any of us had harmed him and—"

"And incur extra time in jail for doing it?" supplemented Brock. "No, even you morons wouldn't be crazy enough for that. Don't worry. Bruce often goes on an all-night rabbit hunt. He'll turn up safe and sound, before long. He always does. Breakfast is a mightier lure to him than rabbits. If he goes to the Charles camp instead of here, they'll look after him."

Without doubt, Ethan's long hours of writing had been reported to him, and he seemed to be seeking the results of the steady scribbling. The scratchpad lay in its usual place; sadly depleted in thickness. But no written sheets lay stacked near it. His gaze drifted to the waste-basket on the floor beside the desk. It was half-full of a riffle of torn scraps of paper.

Apparently, Ethan Brock had not been satisfied with his literary efforts, whatever they may have been. The man made mental note of the riffle. Brock smiled to himself, then stretched and

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slowly crawled out of bed. Midway in the process he heard the padding of rapid feet in the hallway outside. Bruce ran into the room.

"See!" exulted Ethan, grasping the collie's fluffy mane with both hands and shaking it in affectionate roughness. "I told you he'd come back by breakfast time. He always does. Bruce, you disreputable old ragamuffin, your coat is stuck together with every variety of burr and cockleweed east of the Mississippi. And your legs are black with mud. You're tuckered out, with your absurd night's hunting. I wonder why I harbor such a brute."

The dog had greeted his master with his wonted eagerness. But now he lay down heavily on the hearthrug. In another second he was sleeping like the dead. He was completely exhausted.

"He's always like that after his all-night hunts," said Brock, in ostentatious disgust. "It's odd he doesn't learn better, from experience. But dogs are disgustingly human."

The masked man was brushing clean the hearth. Now he picked up the two lamps and tucked the waste-basket under his arm and left the room. Halfway down the hall he set down his burdens on a bench and proceeded to take from the basket a double handful of paper scraps.

These bits of the scratchpad's pages he scanned at first eagerly. Then his jaw dropped. Next, he emptied out the basket's entire contents on the bench.

Each and every fragment of torn scratchpad paper was blank; on both sides.

A QUARTER of an hour later Brock's breakfast was served by another of the masked men. With him also the man had brought a panful of table scraps for Bruce. But the collie did not lift his head, nor open his eyes. He was still gripped by slumber; a slumber far too deep for the paw-scratchings and muffled barks which sometimes accompanied his dreams.

Brock ate his breakfast in leisurely fashion. Then, before he pounded for the man to come and take away the tray, he reread twice a twist of soiled paper. This bit of writing he then consigned to the fire. After which he mumbled under his breath to the sleeping collie:

"Only one more fish to be caught, Brucie, boy! Then the whole thing will be complete. Now, let's sit back and watch the show. I hope we won't catch that 'one more' fish. But something tells me we will."

Toward noon Ethan Brock looked up from a book he was trying to read by such light as filtered through the shutters' heart-shaped apertures; as the spokesman came striding nervously into the room.

"I expected you before now," Brock hailed him. "I see my perfectly good plan failed."

The old man's face was weary and discouraged as he spoke. He looked like one who had staked his all, and lost. He peered at the masked visitor from the sunken eyes of infinite age and misery.

"Just the same," he added, "it was a good plan. A *good* plan, Mr. First Conspirator. And I'm less sorry for its failure than that my trusted secretary should have proved himself a traitor."

The spokesman essayed twice to speak; twice thought better of it; then said, grimly:

"I don't know anything about your 'trusted secretary' and about a 'traitor,' Mr. Brock. But I do know *this*."

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From his shirt he produced a packet of paper. It was made up of sheets similar to those of the scratch-pad. They were close-folded and doubled and were held together by a stout rubber band. He handed them to Ethan, who glanced keenly at the outer sheet, then let the packet fall unheeded to the floor. He looked infinitely old and beaten; a sight to rouse pity in the worst of his countless enemies.

"One of my men," said the masker, "drove down as far as Balderston—some twenty miles from here, on the road to Granite—for supplies. We did not dare buy, closer to this place, for fear of being identified later. He happened to notice a bit of white hanging to a barbed wire fence, close beside the road—as if it had been scraped off some one or something that wriggled through the fence, to cut off distance at that wide bend.

"He stopped to see what it was. It was that group of close-written sheets and those two letters you have just been looking at. In brief, Mr. Brock, it was a set of instructions concerning to-morrow's meeting of the C. G. & X. directors, addressed to Judge Griggs; and inclosed with a note to one Carter, telling him to deliver it to Griggs and telling of your imprisonment."

"You amaze me!" mumbled Ethan, with a show of unconcerned mockery that would not have deceived a child.

THE spokesman continued: "If this set of instructions and campaign plans had reached this man named Carter—whoever he may be—Judge Griggs would have had the power to upset all the plans of our friends at the quarterly meeting to-morrow. By a miracle, they were intercepted.

"You were writing all last evening. To throw us off the track, you tore up blank paper into bits and put it in the wastebasket. You fastened the pages you had actually written, to your collie, and had told him to take it to this unknown Carter. I read, during the war, of collies carrying messages to any one whose name and location they knew. This dog of yours must have been trained in the same way. But, wriggling through that barbed wire fence, to take a short cut, he lost the message. I ought to shoot him."

"Shoot him!" screamed Ethan Brock, leaping to his feet. "If you do, I swear by the Eternal that I'll spend a million dollars to trace you; and another two thousand dollars to a dependable trigger man to empty a sub-machine gun into you! That dog is the one friend I have. I realize it, now, as I never realized it. If he dies through your fault, you and every member of your family will follow him.

"There, there!" he grumbled. "I'm sorry I lost my temper. Be content with your victory. I pledge you my word—my oath, if you prefer—that the dog shall carry no more messages while I am here. Let him stay with me. For your own sake. See!"

As he spoke, he stooped over Bruce and dug his hands again deep into the mighty ruff. The stiff fingers fumbled far down in that mass of fluffy fur. Then they emerged; holding Bruce's collar.

"I had this clip made for it," he explained. "The clip we always fasten messages in. Take it, if you don't trust me. Or examine him, every time he leaves the room, to see if any writing is fastened anywhere to him. But don't harm him. It will go much easier for you all if he stays alive."

As the man departed, Ethan slumped back into his hearthside chair.

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"Brucie!" he whispered miserably, to the sleeping dog. "We were right. Carter *is* in on it. They've bought him. Do you blame me, Brucie, for saying you're the only one of the lot I can trust, a hundred per cent? All a lonely and cranky old man, like me, can hope to get is what he can buy over the counter. Generally not even that.

"Carter! I—I kind of halfway trusted the boy. He was nice. He seemed clean. I got my first doubt of him when that man reached in my breast pocket for the gun. Hardly any one carries a gun there, Brucie. So I figured somebody at home had tipped him."

Ethan Brock spent the next thirty hours quietly in his pleasant prison room; Bruce with him except when Ethan ordered him out for exercise.

AS dusk fell on the third night since his capture Brock stood silent and tense; his ear pressed close to the shutter of one of the windows. For an hour he had stood thus. At last through the twilight silences of the forest there sounded far off a faintly shrill whistle. It was followed at regular intervals by a second and a third; and then by three more in fast succession. Brock nodded approval. Going to the door, he hammered at the panel, calling for the spokesman to be sent to him. Presently the masked man came in.

There was a droop to the leader's figure and bearing; a stricken aspect. Brock eyed him keenly.

"The bad news has just reached you?" he cackled. "I'm afraid so. You look it. And there's worse. You youngsters ought not to challenge us oldsters. 'It's safer playing with the lion's cub than with the lion that's dying,' you know."

The masker made as though to lock the door behind him as usual. Brock said:

"Don't bother to do that. It's too late, now. The sorry game is up, my friend. Your crowd in Granite has played it—as cleverly as a kindergarten child would play poker with an oldtime Mississippi River gambler. And with the same result.

"The night you brought me here I wrote out in duplicate my instructions to Judge Griggs. One of those two sets of orders and authorizations I addressed to my secretary, Carter, with a note telling him to turn them over to Griggs. The other set I addressed to my chauffeur, Geoghan.

"I wrote to Geoghan to turn the first set over to Carter, unopened, and to say Bruce had brought them; and to take the second set to Griggs. I made secret marks on the outside page of Carter's set. It was the set you brought back to me with a cock-and-bull story of your man finding it in a wire fence. That is how I knew Carter is in with you."

The masker started, then recovered his nerve by manifest effort. The tired old voice continued:

"In the other packet, along with my duplicate stuff, I wrote to Griggs a careful description of this room's specifications. I told him to go to the county court house and find the plans for such a house and room, and where it was, and what architect had planned it. Very simple, my dear novice. I also took the liberty of cutting off the laundry mark from the pyjamas which you admitted were yours; and I sent it to Griggs to be traced.

"I gave him orders to let me know, at this hour, whether or not he had succeeded in getting the C. G. & X. dividend passed and the merger put through and the other arrangements of

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the opposition crowd broken up—which will strip them bare of cash and smash them like caterpillars—and if he could locate this house, from the architect's plans; with a posse of State police.

"The affirmative signal was to be a certain number of police whistle toots, blown in a certain sequence—just five minutes before the posse should close in on us. I—

"Dear me, Brucie!" Ethan interrupted himself, in mild astonishment. "The poor chap ran away as if the devil was after him. Listen to that annoying din outside, Brucie. The State police must be closing in. And, Brucie, you're the cause of it all, old chum.

"If you hadn't proved you could find your way back home, by your following me there three weeks ago, if you hadn't understood and obeyed when I fastened that big packet to your clip and when I said: 'Take it to Geoghan—to *Geoghan,*' where would you and I be now, as far as our chances of freedom go; and where would be the army of poor people who trust my way of running the C. G. & X., Brucie? Tell me that, you—you gorgeous pal of mine!"

"Griggs," observed Ethan Brock, next day, "I want you to buy in the Charles camp for me. It's on the market. That camp has taught me something, this past month or so. It's taught me there are better things than finance, and better places to live in than a crowded city. Besides, it's done Bruce a lot of good. He and I are going to spend six months a year there, after this. I'm changing its name to The Brockbruce Camp.

"And never mind pressing the case against Carter and those other poor bunglers and masked incompetents of Belknap's. They've paid enough. They're squashed flat, every one of them.

"Bruce!" he interrupted himself, "if you knew how foolish and vacuous you look when you're scratching, you'd never do it again. The only two who can live as cheaply as one are a dog and his flea!"

THE END.

When Dogs Wore Armor

ARMOR for horses, especially the gallant chargers that carried the mailed knights into battle in medieval days, is not a new idea to any one familiar with the deeds of past heroes. Armor for dogs is probably something that few people have ever heard of. Yet in ancient times men protected their smaller pets as carefully as they did those on which they depended for transportation and war.

In the ruins of ancient Carthage a beautiful mosaic of approximately 200 A. D. has been unearthed, which depicts a vividly colored hunting scene. The use of nets and hounds is plainly demonstrated in this perfectly preserved relic, and curiously enough the dogs are encased in a protective suit of armor to guard them against the murderous tusks of the wild boars upon whose trail they have been set. In those days, apparently, armor for his pack was a very necessary part of every hunting noble's sporting equipment.

Bruce Bryan.

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"Stand where you are, sir!"

Captain Redspurs

By F. V. W. MASON

Author of "To Be Court-Martialed," "The Snaring of Sergeant Frost," etc.

The fate of the Union army depended upon Captain Hubert Cary of the cavalry—and he was a captive of his Confederate kinsmen

A SMALL troop of Federal cavalry, under command of Captain Hubert Cary, was reconnoitering in Loudoun County, Virginia, not far from Harper's Ferry. Cary's objective was to scout the probable number and location of Confederate troops in the vicinity. He had just sent his subordinate, Lieutenant Blake, off on a side expedition when he and his handful of men heard the whinny of a horse through the trees ahead.

Advancing as quietly as possible, the Union troopers came to a farmhouse where a number of horses were picketed. They were surprised when several men clad in the uniforms of Northern cavalrymen dashed out of the house, scrambled onto their horses and fled, despite Cary's shouts that he and his men were friends.

The Yankee captain soon discovered why the surprised strangers had fled so precipitately. Behind a barn lay a murdered boy; inside the house was a bound and semiconscious old man, his feet in a pan of blazing coals, who mumbled deliriously that "he wouldn't tell where his money was." In an upstairs room was a terrified, strikingly beautiful and defiant girl who fired a shot at Cary before he disarmed her.

She refused to heed his explanations, believing him to be a member of

This story began in last week's Argosy.

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the same band that had raided the house, and when Cary, over the protests of his men, had her horse saddled and let her go, she made good her threat to summon Confederate cavalry.

Before Cary's men had had time to rest their horses, a large troop of Confederates swooped down on the Northerners. As his outnumbered force fled, Cary, knowing he had the best horse, lingered behind to distract the attention of the Southerners and to try to lead them off on a false scent.

He succeeded, but after a short run down an unfamiliar road he discovered he had entered a *cul-de-sac,* an abandoned gravel pit from which he could not escape. He surrendered with the best grace he could and was courteously treated by his captors. Their generosity turned to cold hatred, though, when they returned to the farmhouse and saw the murdered boy and tortured man.

Preparations were made to hang Cary and the few of his men who had been captured, but the arrival of another group of Confederate horse saved them. At the head of the new arrivals was Captain Craig Carey, Hubert's Southern cousin.

Craig Carey who, like all the Southern Careys, spelled his last name with an " e," greeted his cousin affectionately and explained to the others what Hubert had already suspected—that the raiding murderers who had started the trouble were not Federals, but guerrillas who had gotten hold of Federal uniforms.

Hubert Cary, as a prisoner of war, was taken to Philomont, the Carey home, where he was warmly welcomed by Melissa, his cousin, and Little Grandmother Susanna. There, too, he found the girl he had rescued from the guerrillas, Lenore Duveen, and began a bantering flirtation with her. She gave him the nickname of Captain Redspurs.

As the relatives and the various Confederate officers stationed at Philomont were about to go in to dinner, Hubert Cary overheard a military secret of vital importance—Harper's Ferry was about to be attacked. *(Part II begins here.)*

CHAPTER V.

RAID AT NIGHT.

CONVINCING, but mechanical, was the interest Hubert Cary paid to the light hearted chatter that flickered over the old mahogany dinner table. Convincing because Cousin Craig's eyes were forever seeking his when they were not fixed on Lenore Duveen who, gay as if no danger had ever threatened her, tactly kept the conversation of these hard-bitten young men within safe channels.

" Jackson, McLaws and A. P. Hill," like a maddening refrain those three names throbbed in Hubert's brain. He must somehow get away. Nearly thirteen thousand Union troops would be hopelessly trapped if he failed.

Instinctively, he knew that all of these soft spoken officers had been warned concerning his having overheard Captain Chew's incautious remarks. Moreover, his ears, well trained in such details, had detected the tramp of pickets being posted in a double cordon about the stately plantation house. Cousin Craig intended to be as good as his word, it seemed.

While replying to Melissa's lazy raillery he decided that " Little Grandmother " Susanna, Craig's great-great-grandmother, was the only wholly comforting element. To his great joy he

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found the ancient lady's humor and kindly common sense still sharp and bright as a new knife. Fragile and petite in her gray silk and lace she beamed on her dark uniformed guest.

"Dear, dear," she cried to Lenore Duveen who sat at the prisoner-guest's right, "I declare I'll never forget the first time Hubie came to visit Philomont. Land sake's, he was the biggest, reddest headed rascal a body ever laid eyes on. Wanted to ride every colt on the place right off and nearly broke his neck tryin' it. Co'se Lissa set her cap fo' him then and there—"

While the six gray clad officers threw back their heads and laughed with that infuriating patronage which old friends deem their right, Melissa blushed to the roots of her hair.

"La, Little Grandma, you'll be makin' me out a regular little flirt—and Ah'm not, am I, Hubert?"

Loyally, Hubert supported her and was conscious of the Duveen girl's evident amusement.

"Nonsense, Lissa," said Grandma Susanna after taking a sip of Madeira, "you've been a flirt and a shameless heartbreaker ever since you could stand in your crib." She turned her keen gray eyes on Hubert again. "Yes, yes, and I remember your Uncle George. He was another throw-back to the E Careys. Dear George! He always drank too much, gambled too much and loved too much; but he was a sweet boy and everybody down here worshiped him. I hope he's well, Hubert?"

"He's tolerable well, Little Grandma, and he always speaks of you."

"Good Lord, Mis' Susanna," broke in Chambers with a wry smile "yo' don't seem to think much of the E Careys—you'll have Miss Duveen thinkin' we don't do much in Loudoun County but race, gamble and drink."

"I don't reckon we do," came the old lady's remark with a smile that robbed the assertion of any sting, "but we do it right well."

"Most charmingly!" Lenore Duveen flashed a smile that made more than one gray officer flush. "But, Captain Redspurs, where did you get that clean looking horse you ride? You didn't steal him down on the Peninsula, did you — along with all those poor girls' hearts?"

GRINNING, Hubert said, "Not that one. It was Uncle George who gave me Eclipse."

"Eclipse!" There was a perceptible stir among the lean bodied officers in gray and Lenore Duveen looked to him with a fresh interest as Captain Chew burst out:

"Eclipse? Sholy, suh, he's not the get of the famous American Eclipse that raced back in '23?"

"Indeed he is, captain, straight descended. I've got his papers back in Boston."

Little Grandmother settled back in her chair, her fragile, blue veined hands caressing the lustrous mahogany of her chair arms.

"Eclipse? Mercy me, how that does carry me back! It was American Eclipse that Colonel Ambler brought down from the No'th to race against Sir Henry who was bred not far from here. If an old lady's memory isn't at fault both Eclipse and Sir Henry were descended from the peerless Diomed."

A handsome young captain with black hair that fell almost to his shoulders pushed back his chair and raised his glass so that it sparkled jewel-like as he bowed to Little Grandmother.

"Ma'am and gentlemen, I rise to offer a toast which we can all drink—To

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Diomed; greatest racer that ever put hoof to the soil of the United—er—the soil of America."

Uniforms sprang up and eager young faces were briefly gilded by the candelabra's fourteen candles when the seven officers drained their glasses.

Then, at an imperceptible signal from the Little Grandmother, the ladies rose and Lenore Duveen cast the dark uniformed officer a curious, searching look. He caught it and was intrigued while, with a silken whisper of skirts and petticoats, the Golden Diana swept out into the living room.

The gray clad officers perceptibly relaxed, lit long, black cheroots and, after studiously avoiding the topic for a few minutes, at last drifted into the inevitable comparison of Union and Confederate cavalry—tactics, equipment, theory and all. But with innate tact, Craig Carey tried once more to avoid the fatal topic.

"Last time I saw you, Hubert, you were telling about that fellow who wanted to duel you."

"Duel me?"

"Why, yes, don't you remember? Who was the fellow that wanted to be cadet captain at the Point?"

Hubert Cary's fingers tightened on the stem of his wine glass.

"Joyce MacKenny, you mean? You know, I think he's cracked. Nothing will ever convince him that I didn't tattle about his hazing that boy in order to get the cadet captaincy myself."

"When a mean man gets set with a mean notion, it's mighty hard to shake one loose from the other," observed Captain Chew with semi-drunken philosophy.

"Have you seen him since the war began?"

"Irony of Fate, I suppose; he's none other than adjutant of the command with which I am now serving. And a major, to make it worse."

A SILENCE fell, then presently the conversation drifted to a discussion of the respective armies. In detail they went over the battles fought earlier that year along the James and in the tangles of the Wilderness.

Again Jonadab filled the glasses and passed dainty crackers which tasted wonderful after the long weeks of hardtack.

"I'll admit we have the horses of you, suh," Lieutenant Chambers remarked absently tugging at his short black mustache, "and our troopers are men who have ridden since boyhood, but your service, suh, has five horses to replace every one that falls; youah troopers have breech-loading carbines and plenty of good equipment of all kinds."

"True," Hubert, solemn for once, inclined his red head, "we have all that you say, but against this we have a fearful handicap. We lack leaders skilled and understanding in the use of cavalry." His eyes included all the earnest, clean-bred faces in the semicircle before him.

"I wonder if the truest kind of bravery isn't that of the man who rides into battle feeling that his life may be thrown away because some one above him doesn't understand his business?"

Apparently such a thought had not occurred to those slim young gentlemen in gray, any more than it would occur to most historians in later years.

"It's queer, I've never thought of it that way," Craig seemed to voice the general sentiment. "I reckon we-all are too wrapped up in our own troubles, such as these infernal guerrillas and jayhawkers to realize it.—

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Thank you, Jonadab, fill Master Hubert's first—As I was saying, Hubie, I wish you'd tell these gentlemen just what those guerrillas looked like. Our department commander has issued orders for us to catch them and hang them on sight."

Hubert put down his glass of brandy.

"Sorry, I didn't see much of them, but Miss Duveen can give you a good description of them if she chooses. I only saw one, but I would know him anywhere. He was a big, black-bearded fellow with a long pointed nose and a red scar on his left cheek. Hope I meet that swine again, sometime."

"Yes, Archer and his sort are responsible for most of the bitterness in these parts," Tom Chambers stated solemnly. "Take to-day. Old man Calthorp will swear to the end of his days 'twas Yankees who murdered his boy and tortured him, and there's plenty of fools ready to believe him, just the same as Union folks in Kentucky are ready to swear it's the Confederate cavalry that steals their stock and burns their barns."

"Let's have just one more brandy —make it the 1801, Jonadab—" suggested Craig with a sudden laugh which banished this sudden seriousness. "Then we'll join the ladies—"

Chairs were grating back over the glossy hardwood floors of the old dining room when every officer in the room froze in his place. Somewhere, off in the darkness, a carbine had cracked, ripping the peace of the purple black night into shreds. *Crack! Crack!* It sounded as if some giant's boy was splitting kindling.

Hubert Cary looked at Craig Carey strangely—in an instant the well-loved cousin vanished and in his place stood an enemy officer. These men with whom he had dined must be killed or captured if opportunity presented.

He stood quite still and apparently forgotten with young Chew's careless outburst dimming in his ears while the stately old mansion awoke from the calm of years into a feverish activity. Yelling questions and commands, officers rushed about, snatching up pistol belts, sabers and, of them all, only Craig Carey was ready to deal with the situation when, at a dead run, a mounted trooper came galloping up to the door.

He flung himself off his mount and clattered up the front steps to where Craig Carey stood dwarfed by the four great pillars before the entrance of Philomont. Even as the galloper's boots grated on the drive's gravel, a bugle began braying breathlessly in the direction of the barns and sleepy voices demanded to know "what in blazes was wrong?"

STILL standing quietly in the now deserted dining room, the Northerner awaited his chance; first he must learn the situation and then—he hoped he could get away without a fight. Quite distinctly the messenger's gasping voice came to him:

"Patrol of Yank cavalry headin' down Berlin Pike, suh—"

"How many?" Craig snapped, still fumbling at the buckle of his sword belt. "Speak up!"

"Cain't nowise tell, suh. It were pow'ful dark out yonder."

"Mount up—tell Sergeant Pegram to have half of the first and second platoons saddle up while the other two stand ready to repel an attack. I will be along in a minute—"

In the distance sounded deep shouts and the clatter of hoofs whereat slaves began to scream and the house resound-

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ed with sound. Then, all at once, Philomont seemed empty and deserted.

His innate gallantry conquering an impersonal calm, Hubert Cary went to protect the women from any sudden influx of raiders; in the living room his uniform would be an efficient safe conduct.

"Daresay some of those boys will be soberer now—" said Little Grandmother as she sat very straight in her rocker and went on with her embroidery as though nothing more serious than a child's squabble was about to take place in the firefly-filled night outside of Philomont.

"Your friends are coming nearer, captain," was Lenore Duveen's remark in an effort to sustain the old lady's assumption of calm, but her eyes were wider than usual and her breast beneath the white dress was rising sharply.

Steadily, the distinctive sharp *crack!* of carbines sounded nearer.

"Oh, laws!" choked Melissa when across the wide moonlit lawn a riderless horse, snorting with fear, came galloping with stirrups flying.

Next a bareheaded trooper appeared, yelling: "Look out! They's a million o' Yankees on the pike!"

Hubert Cary's tall form grew taller still when, through the French windows, he watched more fleeing outposts tear into sight, sabers out and saddle bags pounding the flanks of their short-coupled Virginia half-breds.

Now a dim group of horsemen appeared at the far end of the long driveway and Hubert Cary's heart leaped to see them.

Melissa began to whimper. "Oh, laws, what's goin' to happen? We—we're all goin' to be killed—oh, Hubie, don't let them kill us!"

An officer who had dashed upstairs to find his sidearms and who had apparently been delayed now came pounding downstairs, his spurs jingling. Eager young face lit, he paused in the doorway to call out a reassurance:

"Don't you worry, ladies, we'll tend to these sassy Yankees and be back directly for our coffee!" Then he saw the red-haired officer in blue and his light manner vanished.

"Captain Cary, I reckon you've been overlooked. You'll give me your parole?"

"No." Fires kindled in Cary's eyes.

"Give it, Hubie—darlin', they'll hurt you else!"

"Sorry, Lissa—I can't."

Melissa gave a little scream when the officer's jaw tightened and his revolver leaped out.

"Stand where you are, sir!"

HUBERT moved not a muscle. "I shouldn't dream of it, Lieutenant Thorne, while the ladies are here." He turned to Little Grandmother, his expression anxious. "Don't you think you'd be a bit safer upstairs?" he pleaded when orange flashes of fire began to rake the darkness halfway down the beech-shaded drive.

"I have lived through two wars," declared the little old lady, "and I once shot an Indian myself, so I reckon it would be amusing to watch a third war from my own parlor window. Besides, I've got no embroidery wool upstairs."

"But maybe Miss Duveen and Lissa will go up."

"Indeed I'll not," came Lenore's deep tones. "The sight of Federal cavalry doesn't frighten me; you see, I'm used to it."

"Please! Lieutenant Thorne, won't you persuade—" The prisoner's voice was drowned out by a chorus of hoarse

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yells rising from north of Philomont, and now the watchers at the window saw the appearance of a last gray horseman. His horse was limping along at a slow walk despite its rider's frantic spurring.

Just as it reached a flower fountain set in the circle of the driveway the wounded animal halted and swayed, then its legs gave way with ludicrous suddenness and it fell. As though it were an act instead of grim reality, the rider calmly stepped off and the moonlight flashed on the barrel of his carbine when he whipped it up and sighted at an indiscreet mass of horsemen charging up the drive. He fired.

"Oh, my God!" Melissa screamed shrilly when, puncturing the night with incisive reports, came a ragged fusillade of carbine shots. The unhorsed rider uttered a piercing scream and fell half into the pool, his legs jerking with dreadful spasmodic lunges. A pane of glass in the living room shattered with a high tinkling sound and Lenore Duveen gave a breathless gasp and with one hand clutched her throat.

"Oh—oh, look! Oh, look! He—he's hurt! No—he's killed!"

Little Grandmother, sitting straighter than ever, went on sewing. Said she, "In a war many men get killed, my dear."

More shots clattered outside, making the window panes rattle; another pane was splintered by something that rang *zwe-e-e* through the lamp-lit room and shattered a Dresden doll on the mantelpiece before it buried itself with a *tchunk!* in the wall.

Lissa fainted comfortably on a couch. Lieutenant Thorne cursed genteelly and stood plainly undecided on seeing a long line of horsemen come leaping over a box hedge at the far edge of the lawn.

Cary meanwhile had caught the glimmer of long shafts and a flicker of pennons. Lancers, by the Lord Harry! What would they do? Probably they'd ride by the mansion to hurl themselves on the hastily mounting Confederates, quite unaware they were assailing a full troop of the enemy. They might not come back this way! He was gathering himself when a strained voice called out:

"Steady, captain; you had better stand quite still."

SHARP indecision gripped the red-haired Federal captain. This chance of escape would certainly be brief, for the Federal raiders, outnumbered, must in their turn flee very soon. But Lieutenant Thorne's revolver was out and ready. What to do?

"I'm afraid that poor devil by the fountain's done for," Cary called to Lenore Duveen. "Can you see whether he's still moving?"

His heart pounded and his jaw line became tighter. All too well he realized that the step he was planning would forever cut him off from the Southern Careys. But he and his affairs did not count, he fiercely reminded himself—did not matter in the least.

Lenore Duveen drew near, her white bouffant skirt a-sway as she advanced towards the window.

"I—I'm afraid he's—"

The sentence ended in a startled gasp, for with the speed of thought Hubert Cary's hands shot out and caught her by the elbows.

Swinging Lenore Duveen off her feet he set the startled girl down between himself and the gaping lieutenant in gray.

"Halt! Or I—"

The Confederate leveled up his re-

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volver but swung it aside when he found Lenore Duveen's slender white form over his sights and effectively screening the blue clad officer who was leaping through the hall door.

"Halt! You cowardly swine! Halt!" Thorne panted and, elbowing aside the speechless and outraged girl, bounded out onto the wide piazza in time to see his prisoner clutching at the reins of a riderless trooper's mount.

Neatly silhouetted in the open door of Philomont, Thorne paused to sight at the center of the fugitive's broad back, but just then some shrubbery beyond the fountain became filled as with gigantic fireflies.

"Oh, my God—!" Lieutenant Thorne choked out the words and, before the horror-stricken eyes of she who wavered in the hallway, his poised revolver fell. Clasping his chest, Lieutenant Thorne sank gently to his knees and all the while coughed violently. Then he suddenly slumped sidewise and lay flat with his gay gold buttons reflecting the house lights.

Only Lenore Duveen saw Hubert Cary, with magnificent ease, whirl himself into the saddle of the loose-horse and instantly spur off towards the stables.

"Turn back! For God's sake! Turn back!" he was shouting when he vanished from her sight.

CHAPTER VI.

AMBUSH.

EVERY nerve tingling with anticipation of the impending skirmish, Hubert Cary snatched out a saber which he found buckled to the pommel and thrust through the cinch strap of the riderless horse he had captured. Ever searching for the officers of the rescuing detachment, he tried to recognize the situation amid the vivid and dramatic scenes that were taking place about him.

The chunky blue lancers, lances lowered with red and white pennons whipping smartly, uttered deep triumphant shouts as, like medieval men-at-arms, they rode down gray stragglers seeking shelter among the moon silvered barns. Behind the stables loud shouts marked the rallying of the surprised Confederates. Anxiously Cary peered about. Where in hell were the lancer officers? He must warn them they were heavily outnumbered; that they should immediately retreat.

While spurring across a flower bed beyond the front lawn, his eyes darted furiously from one group of battle-mad lancers to the next. Could this be his brother's troop? Ha, at last he caught the faint glimmer of a shoulder strap and kicked his horse ahead.

Although he did not recognize this short, heavy bodied lancer captain, the other apparently knew him.

"Thank God, we've found you, Cary!" he shouted above the crackle of shots. "Found Lieutenant Blake 'bout sundown — said — Rebs had gobbled you."

The snap of revolver shots and the ringing shiver of steel made the mellow September night resound so Cary was forced to yell his words.

"Look out! There's full troop camps here—forming back of barns!"

"The hell you say! Perkins!" Alarm sprang into the lancer captain's bearded face and, reining in, he called an order to a bugler who rode at his elbow. Immediately a bugle's brazen voice began to shriek the recall. Cary plucked at the lancer captain's sleeve.

"Some—my men—prisoners in corn

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crib! I know this place—will you lend me a few men?"

"By God, yes! A fine heel tap to a neat little raid." There was a real cavalry recklessness in those eyes below the stranger's wide brimmed, black felt hat. "Sergeant Mulvaney, take two squads and follow Captain Cary. Rally point is—bridge across Catoctin Creek!"

"Bejabers, sir, and the Rebels is thick behind the barns like fleas on a dog!" was the sergeant's alarmed cry when they got a glimpse of the training track.

"I know it," Cary yelled back. How good it was to have a horse between his knees again. "Your four strongest horses, please—they will have to carry double."

"Right, sir," Sergeant Mulvaney called off some names just before the rescue party clattered around the great, white-painted hay barn and dashed towards the dark outlines of the corn cribs behind it. Like the eyes of many monsters, the abandoned Confederate watch fires dotted the area and filled the air with ghostly, drifting smoke. Yes, and yonder a dark mass of troopers was forming with ominous steadiness. Cary rose in his stirrups and raised a call, penetrating as any trumpet's.

"Tatnall! Where are you, Tatnall?"

"Here, sir," came cries from a huge crib on the far edge of the group. "For God's sake don't try to git us! They'll kill you!"

With all the impudence of Ajax defying the lightning, the eight lancers whirled up to the corn cribs, flung lances back on their arm loops, drew pistols and commenced to blaze away at that dark double line now getting in movement like a wave which, far off-shore, gathers itself for a furious assault on a breakwater none too formidable.

DURING this audacious diversion Cary flung himself to the ground and, slipping over his left arm the reins of his plunging mount, dashed to that corn crib from which the voices had come. Just as he grabbed at a peg securing the crib's hasp lock his ears caught the dull thunder of many hoofs; damn! the Confederate countercharge had already begun.

"Quick!" he barked, flinging back the door. "Mount up behind first four men!"

Bullets began moaning through the air when Sergeant Mulvaney and his men gave up their magnificent defiance and, bent low over their horses' manes, came pounding back.

"By the Howly Virgin," the sergeant gasped, "there's a full squadron o' Rebels down—Och!" In a queer, spasmodic twist Mulvaney's heavy figure bent far over backwards and because his hands were locked in reins, the stricken soldier nearly pulled his mount over with him as he fell.

More bullets. Cary heard them hitting the crib with a noise like enormous hailstones striking a barn roof. One of the rescued prisoners, Kaskel, gave one dreadful cry and collapsed in the crib door, his farming days forever done.

All was noisy confusion. From the corner of his eye Cary caught glimpses of Tatnall leaping onto Mulvaney's horse; of little Denby hauled across the saddlebow of a powerful bareheaded lancer; of Cunningham scrambling awkwardly onto the back of an enormous brown gelding and futilely shaking a fist at the enemy. Yells! Shouts! Shots! A horse was hit and, scream-

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ing like a woman in pain, went plunging madly towards the gray troopers who, yelling, were dashing forward like a steel-tipped comber.

No time to find stirrups, but sure that his last man was mounted, Hubert Cary hurled himself half into the saddle and wrenched his horse about to cover the retreat of a laggard trooper. Too late, Cunningham and the man who had rescued him were pounced upon by a quartet of fierce troopers whose sabers flashed in the moonlight like windmills of steel. Cries of pain and terror, forms slipping earthward and now the Confederate horses in the second rank began jumping over two fresh obstacles.

Fortunately it was a strong horse Hubert Cary had seized. He realized that as he wheeled and, following what remained of the rescue party, raced for the protection of the lancers' main body.

These, drawn up on the broad lawn before Philomont in a heavy double rank, suddenly lowered their lances, raised a ringing Yankee cheer and hurled themselves at the advancing enemy.

Once the rescue squad had rejoined the main body, Cary uttered a ringing fox hunter's whoop and wheeled, aware that the warm joy of battle was tingling in his veins. Momentarily forgotten was the fact that Craig Carey must be somewhere among those yelling Rebel troopers who swung and slashed with such terrible effect; that somewhere among those dripping lance points Tommy Blake might be fighting for life.

Yielding to overwhelming pressure, the Federal left commenced to fall back through that same garden in which Hubert and Craig had played as children. Now the lancers abandoned their lances and resorted to revolvers—better suited for a mêlée, such as was developing.

BY one of those inexplicable freaks of battle, the two forces suddenly fell apart as definitely as if separated by the invisible hands of a Titan. Somewhere off in the moonlit dark Hubert recognized his cousin's voice imploring his men to fall back and reform.

The thick bodied lancer captain also yelled a command, and what was left of the raiders fell back, some of them wounded, but all of them blackened with powder and all eager to rejoin the battle. Veterans among the blue riders were hastily reloading their revolvers and examining their horses to see what harm they might have suffered, while the greenhorns yelled shrill defiance.

"I must get back to the Ferry," Cary panted to the lancer captain while they cantered back down the drive. "Important news—"

"They'll follow us?"

"Sure to, but maybe we can stop that. Send twenty of your best men ahead with me. I know a good place for ambuscade—on the Catoctin Creek bridge. You'll retreat down road and when the Rebels are on the bridge we'll charge 'em from the flank. Ought to shake 'em—"

"Right—take Carter's platoon—on our left. Blake's with 'em."

Among the tall swaying lances he now glimpsed a familiar figure—one that filled him with joy. There was a real cavalry grace to Tommy Blake's slight figure.

"Hi, Hubie! Carter's been knocked—I'm in command."

"Hi, Tom! Form your men, column of twos," Hubert snapped to his powder-blackened subordinate. "Am-

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bush up at Creek Bridge. Who's this outfit's C. I.?"

"Mike Walters from Philadelphia—damned good man—real cavalryman."

Thus the two conversed in disjointed sentences while the dim ribbon of the Berlin pike unrolled before the detachment's thudding hoofs and dark clumps of trees rushed by. On glancing over his shoulder Hubert Cary's heart lifted to see lancer pennons flaunting beneath the moon. In an instant it seemed that he lived in another age, that he was a feudal baron leading his knights. At his heels perhaps twenty dozen silhouetted heads bobbed up and down and a brief shower of sparks was struck by some flying hoof shoe.

Would the ambush succeed? He felt suddenly sobered. They'd have to fight like hell. Did not the fate of twelve thousand men depend upon its success?

He had scarcely formulated his plans when the stone bridge's massive and moss grown bulk appeared. They crossed it, then at Hubert Cary's command the lancers at once leaped off and turned over panting mounts to a quartet of horse holders who galloped on down the road to disappear around a bend.

Skillfully the bareheaded captain and his lieutenant concealed their handful—so few that Hubert's heart sank—among the laurel thickets on either slope. Worse yet, only a few of the lancers were equipped with carbines, but the covert was so thick that the heavy Colt revolvers might do effective work.

The breathless ambushers had scarcely settled themselves before shots and yells sounded from the direction of Philomont, preluding the mad drumming of a horse's hoofs.

"Captain Cary! Captain Cary! Where are you?" The bugler rode into sight, his gray horse pounding along at an extended gallop.

"Here!" Hubert yelled. "All ready!"

Having identified the ambush, the bugler instantly wheeled and turned back towards the rear guard fight which was drawing steadily nearer.

"Steady, men," the leader called. "Wait for my whistle — then cut loose!"

Tenser grew the attitudes of those sweating troopers among the laurels. Now, like an omen of disaster, a riderless horse appeared, reins dangling loose, another, and then a disorganized stream of lancers. Whether Captain Walters was among them Hubert Cary could not tell; certainly he did not recognize him. What remained of the Federal main body soon passed over the bridge, then a pair of troopers astride wounded horses which they flogged with desperate energy.

BREATH halted in Hubert Cary's lungs and he shrank lower among the dewy leaves when, down the road, a larger mass of horsemen galloped into sight. Their uniforms showed up lighter in the half-light so there could be no doubt of their identity.

Incredibly soon the foremost Confederates dashed out upon the mossy old bridge and, perforce, became jammed together. Had Walters understood? Would the fleeing lancers halt and turn when he gave his signal? What if Captain Walters had been killed? Such things happened.

Equipment a-glitter in the moonlight, the pursuit swept over the bridge amid a miasma of heavy dust.

"Got 'em on the run!" excitedly yelled some trooper. "We'll wipe 'em off the face of the earth—"

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It was hard to estimate the proper moment, but when the end of the pursuing column came in sight Hubert's whistle shrilled like the scream of a harpy.

"Ready! Fire!"

At once the laurel thickets seemed to bloom into gigantic red flowers and the air quivered while, with terrible effect, the dismounted Federals fired into the thick of the enemy formation on the bridge. Terrible moments ensued as stricken horses fell and tripped those behind. Jammed on the narrow bridge the gray troopers had no choice but to ride over their fellows until they themselves went down in the plunging, kicking tangled mass of men and beasts.

At this moment the fleeing lancers turned to charge back down the road with savage energy.

The scene at Hubert Cary's feet became appalling, indescribable. He saw desperate gray riders spring off onto the bridge sides only to be thrust into the stream below; others, able to check their advance, began to put their horses to the none too steep sides of the road and struggled up.

"Steady!" Hubert instantly called out. "Steady! Hold 'em a minute more! Stand ready!"

He had a fleeting glimpse of Captain Walters's returning men in the act of lowering their lances.

"Forward! Come on!" he shouted and, with the dismounted troopers at his back, charged downwards through the shrubbery, shooting as he went.

AN enemy officer on the near side of the bridge saw him coming and, reining about, snatched a revolver from his saddle holster.

Crack! Had the gray officer's horse not reared Cary would have been hit, but as it was the ball hissed by over his head and he plunged on down the slope, badly hampered by spurs which caught in roots and shrubs.

The enemy officer leveled his weapon for a second try, but now Cary found the gray breast over his revolver sight. Was it Craig?—He could not tell and so delayed—war might be war but—those gold buttons seemed to be rushing upon the front sight of his pistol.

Crack! Something rapped his right shoulder and he reeled while the horseman, his revolver evidently empty, snatched at his sword. Pistols and carbines crackled like burning hickory logs while Cary recovered himself. He raised his revolver again, aware that the Confederate was lowering his sword point.

Standing with legs braced far apart, he steadied his aim. Now he had the fellow and the other knew it. His shadowy features set themselves. Craig! He had once before seen his cousin's eyes look like this; it was when an unbroken colt had carried him headlong towards a stone wall. He knew he should have squeezed the trigger and that Craig Carey should have lunged at him; but neither of them did. Craig rushed by and was lost to sight in the mêlée.

A split second later Hubert found himself trading shots with an immensely long limbed Virginia sergeant who, snarling like a trapped wolf, stood astride a dead horse. He could see wide yellow chevrons ripple when the fellow shot, missed and ducked low. His second bullet took the sergeant in the shoulder and spun him half around so that he tripped and fell backwards; before he could settle the matter a riderless mount appeared from nothingness and sent the victor reeling aside.

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He scarcely realized it when the Confederates left on the near side of the bridge, terribly punished and assailed from two sides, whirled to scatter in headlong retreat. Hardly had they gone than Captain Walters's voice could be heard ordering forward the led horses of the ambushers. At once the victors commenced a hasty search among the groaning wounded.

"I'm going ahead," Hubert panted to Walters once he had remounted. "Must get back to the Ferry."

"It'll be a miracle if you do," panted the other Federal. "This whole valley is alive with Rebs—"

From a crest of a hill, a few moments later, Hubert Cary paused to cast a last look back at the distant heights of Philomont. Somewhere back there was Lenore Duveen. His sweaty visage contracted—damn! Coquette or not, her image was haunting. How indescribably lovely she was—too bad that now she would forever hold him one of the vilest of mankind. Sometime soon, he decided, he would search her out in Sharpsburg and try to explain why he had used her body as a shield. Yes—he must face her blazing contempt, her disdain and try to make amends.

CHAPTER VII.

A DARING PLAN.

"THEN, captain, there is no possibility of General Jackson's division being in the Blue Ridge Valley?" Colonel Dixon Miles lifted his severe and heavy features from a map spread on the table before him. Immediately lines of worry engraved on his face were emphasized by the light of a pair of smoky lanterns.

"Absolutely none, sir."

"You looked carefully?" Major MacKenny's sardonic expression seemed to imply a sharp doubt on the point. "You didn't let your instinct for skirmishing run away with you?"

"No." Cary fought to keep down his resentment and kept his eyes on the commanding officer.

A silence fell which remained unbroken by any of the staff officers who stood about the stone walled room in varying attitudes of anxiety.

"Did you see signs of any other enemy corps in the Valley?"

Captain Cary, standing very straight before the council table, nodded a head from which dust and grime had not yet been wiped.

"No, sir, not beyond casual troops—"

"Casual troops?" barked the colonel's adjutant. "Be more specific, captain."

"How large were the units, captain?" Colonel B. F. Davis of the 8th New York Cavalry wanted to know.

"Never more than a company or a troop, sir; nothing important."

"Well, then, why the deuce do you waste our time?" growled Colonel Miles and took a sip of steaming black coffee from the battered tin cup an orderly placed at his elbow. "You told Major Corliss you must see me."

"Yes, sir. It had nothing to do with the original mission, sir. While I was held prisoner in Philomont Manor I overheard a remark. I thought you'd better hear it, sir."

Major MacKenny, his pink and white face contracted into contemptuous lines, leaned sidewise and whispered in Miles's ear. The latter listened and then said, "Don't bother me at a time like this about rumors." Colonel Miles, harassed and torn by his desperate predicament, commenced to

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shift bright headed pins on the map before him. "Davis, where's the last dispatch from General White?"

"You can go, captain." MacKenny's eyes hardened. "In the future, Captain Cary, we hope your reconnaissance will prove more valuable."

"Just a minute, colonel." Major Corliss, commanding Cary's squadron, stepped forward. "Captain Cary told me something of this information during our ride in from the outposts. I believe it very valuable, and he has ridden sixty miles to tell you this."

Several of the grave faced staff officers nodded, but Colonel Miles flung down his pencil and emitted an irritable grunt. MacKenny glowered at his enemy, but said nothing.

"Well, out with it. But I warn you, I don't set much value on chance gossip overheard in a Rebel camp."

Hubert Cary flushed from his yellow collar to the roots of his hair, but said in level tones, "I don't think this was gossip, sir. The man who made the remark was a staff officer of General Stuart's."

"Eh? Stuart's staff? What was his name?"

"Chew, sir, Captain William Chew."

The dark blue knot of staff officers abandoned whatever they were doing and listened.

"HOW did you overhear this precious information of yours?"

"I was standing on a terrace outside of the manor when some Rebel officers inside got into dispute. One of them, Chew, got angry and raised his voice. He said, sir," the dusty cavalry captain stated impressively, "that Jackson's corps is to attack Harper's Ferry from the north—swinging down by way of Martinsburg."

If a bayonet had entered the commanding officer's back he could not have started more convulsively. "From the north? What utter nonsense!"

Major MacKenny rustled his papers irritably. "You see, colonel, he's just wasting your time. We all know our last information before the telegraphs were cut to-night was that Jackson's division is on the Maryland shore and bivouacked just outside of Frederick."

A hum of excited murmurs filled the room like a diapason note on an organ, but Cary said nothing and only reflected on the probable consequences of driving a hard right into MacKenny's sneering, pink moon of a face.

"Go on," abruptly ordered Colonel Miles while staring dubiously up into the weary features of the officer before him. "Get on with this fairy tale."

"Chew also said that the divisions of McLaws and A. P. Hill were to storm Maryland Heights."

"What about Loudoun Heights?" demanded a thin, black mustached colonel of field artillery. "That's our weakest spot."

Hubert Cary made a short negative motion with a hand which yet was spattered with the blood of some trooper who had died during that fight at Catoctin Creek bridge.

"I don't know, sir. Captain Chew started to say something about General Walker's division, but just then another man warned him to be quiet. That's all, sir."

"All! I allow it's a heap plenty," was the acid comment of Colonel Cameron of the 15th Indiana. He turned a grim face on the commanding colonel. "As I've said all along, we've got to clear out of here! Harper's Ferry simply isn't tenable."

Gaunt and sardonic, Colonel Mauls-

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by of the 1st Maryland also foresaw the impending disaster and added his voice to Colonel Cameron's opinion, whereupon the smoky headquarters room became a maelstrom of heated dispute. One and all the various brigade and regimental commanders offered solutions to the problem until Colonel Miles brought his open hand down on the table with a violence that made the lamps flicker.

"Quiet, gentlemen, quiet! I agree that if the plan Captain Cary reports is true," he shot the dusty figure a searching glance, "we cannot, even reenforced by the troops under General White, possibly hold out against four full Confederate divisions." He swept the hot and red faced group with a somber look. "MacKenny, where's that telegram I got yesterday?"

Shadows, thrown gigantic on the walls, hovered and seemed ready to pounce on the officers grouped about the council table when Major MacKenny pulled a single sheet of paper from the breast of his tunic and passed it to his superior.

"Because of orders," Miles explained, "I have not previously made this public."

He read:

WASHINGTON, D. C.
COLONEL DIXON H. MILES,
HARPER'S FERRY.

Our army—(McClellan's)—is in motion; it is important that Harper's Ferry be held to the latest moment. The government has the utmost confidence in you, and is ready to give you full credit for the defense it expects you to make.

H. W. HALLECK, GENERAL-IN-CHIEF.

THE colonel's nasal tones died away and a stunned silence reigned until the cavalry colonel with the black sidewhiskers burst out passionately.

"Good Lord above! Doesn't old Brains know *that all of Lee's army* is between us and McClellan?"

Silver eagles stitched to Colonel Miles's shoulders glimmered briefly as he shrugged and made a gesture of helplessness.

"I presume he must, colonel. Such, however, are his orders."

Under cover of the furious debate which immediately began, Hubert Cary found opportunity to merge into the background and to bolt a piece of bread and cheese brought to him by an orderly. Utterly bone weary, he would have given as many years of his life for a few hours of unbroken sleep.

Once more Colonel Miles's loud rapping forced an unwilling silence.

"I regret, gentlemen, that General Halleck has left us no choice but to defend this post. I am afraid our position is hopeless since Lee is sending no less than four divisions against us."

"Damned if I can understand why," growled a red-haired lieutenant. "Two corps would be ample—"

"Means, of course, that the capture of this post is vital to Lee's plans for the invasion of Maryland," Colonel Cameron opined while thoughtfully tugging at his ragged beard. "But why? Lee can cross the Potomac at a dozen other points."

Despite all his skirmishing, Hubert Cary had been mulling over just that question since seven of the previous evening and, during the long ride back to Harper's Ferry, he had arrived at the conclusion he hesitated to offer. He reapproached the table upon which the much marked map rested.

"Colonel Miles, sir?"

"Well, captain, what is it?"

"Ever since I overheard Captain Chew's remark I've been wondering about the reason for such an over-

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whelming concentration on this point—"

His heavy head outlined against a window that predicted the imminent beginning of dawn, Colonel Miles looked up.

"Well?"

"Excuse me, please. Here's what I mean." Hubert Cary bent over the map, the torn and sweaty parts of his jacket showing up very clear in the lamplight.

"I believe that unless there have been later changes, Lee's line of communications with Richmond at present runs through Rapidan station," he indicated that point on the map, "then through Manassas and so on up to Frederick."

"That is right, captain. What of all this deep conjecturing?"

"I don't pretend to be a tactician, sir," Cary hurried on, "but it is obvious that, by having his communications follow the line of the Potomac, General Lee exposes it to the risk of having it cut by our cavalry."

Said Major Corliss quietly, "Your reasoning is correct, but we have known all along that Lee wants Harper's Ferry for a new line of communications."

"Listen to me, captain," interrupted the Union commander coldly, "if you want your 'great discovery' amplified, I'll oblige you. Ever since this invasion began Lee has wanted to change his line of communication with Richmond to a line running through Winchester, Staunton and Harrisonburg. By capturing Harper's Ferry the Rebels can make use of the Winchester & Potomac railroad and also the B & O as far as Martinsburg. From there it is an easy wagon haul to Hagerstown, Sharpsburg and Frederick. Perhaps now it dawns, captain, just why General Halleck has ordered this post held to the last?"

CARY flushed under his superior's irony while MacKenny burst out,

"But, sir, we haven't got enough men to hold the Ferry and McClellan can never relieve us in time. We're doomed if we stay here."

"Not," eagerly corrected Cary, "if the Winchester & Potomac railroad line *could be crippled!* If the Winchester & Potomac railroad could be seriously disabled, Harper's Ferry would no longer be so important to Lee. He would have to stick to his old line of communication and might not risk enough men to crush our garrison."

When the red-headed cavalry captain stepped back, Colonel Miles briefly announced that the council was at an end, and the grave faced officers with exception of Major Corliss and MacKenny filed out. The commander turned livid with rage.

"How dare you lecture me, sir? You blat about destroying the Potomac & Winchester! Where am I to find a force strong enough to do the task? Idiot! Even if I had the men, Jackson could come driving down from Martinsburg, cut off the field force and besiege my weakened garrison! Get back to your troop!"

Blood roared in Hubert Cary's ears—the stupid fool! Quivering, he remained where he was, though MacKenny sprang to his feet.

"But, sir, it still might be possible to cripple that line without risking a lot of men," Cary persisted.

The seated figure glared but, perhaps too amazed to speak, said nothing.

"What do you mean?" interrupted Major Corliss.

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"It *is* possible, major." His lean features lit, Hubert Cary hurried on. "I've been told, sir, there are five important bridges between here and Mount Jackson; bridges which, if destroyed, would render the Winchester & Potomac useless for at least two weeks."

"Eh, what's that?" Colonel Miles's head swayed up a little and his eyes reluctantly met the bloodshot, blue-gray ones of the tall young captain.

"I think it might be possible to destroy those bridges."

"Blow them up? Bosh! How would you carry the powder?"

"No need to, sir. I could burn them!"

"What you suggest is idiotic. You couldn't get five miles out of Harper's Ferry."

"Not in uniform, sir."

Colonel Miles caught his breath in with a click and some of his hostility departed.

"Do you propose to go into Virginia in civilian clothes?"

"Yes, sir."

"You realize what will happen to you if you are suspected and caught?"

"Yes, sir, I realize that we would be treated as spies."

"Think again what happens to spies—I have had to execute two only recently. It's a hideous fate, captain."

"Yes, sir, but I think the risk is worth taking. Besides, we may not be caught."

THE haggard commandant pulled at his fluffy chin whiskers and made no further comment, but presently arose and made his way to a large and well thumbed scale map which was tacked to the gray-painted wall. Picking up a lantern he held it close to the map and intently studied the course of the Winchester & Potomac a long five minutes. At last he turned and, putting down the lantern, faced the two silent cavalry officers standing before him like anxious bronze and blue figures.

"Success seems most unlikely, captain. I—I—" Colonel Miles paused, at a loss for words, then went uncertainly on. "I will not order a single man to undertake an attempt so little likely of success. But, well, we're in a hopeless situation here so if you can find sufficient volunteers—" he dropped his voice, "we will consider the plan is possible of success. You can go." He turned abruptly to MacKenny. "Now then, major—"

His heart pounding wildly, Cary drew himself up before the harassed commandant and clicked his heels.

"Thank you, sir." And as he spoke his eyes momentarily sought MacKenny's pale brown ones. The fellow was actually gray with anger and no sooner had Cary stepped through the door than he heard the adjutant offering furious objections.

In the deserted orderly room he paused to drain a dipper of water and was just setting it down when Major Corliss strode in from the council chamber.

"I'm hoping you can do it, Cary," said he heartily. "It would be a magnificent thing and strategically sound. Miles realizes it, I think, or he'd never have consented." He stepped closer and added in an undertone: "I wonder if you'd do something for me?"

"Of course, major. Thank you for your support in there." Cary jerked his head towards the headquarters room.

Corliss's head inclined towards him. "I've a sister," he murmured, "who is living near Staunton. Her husband was

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killed in the Union army and word has reached me that she is almost destitute. Here is an envelope addressed to her and containing some money and a letter of only personal importance. Would you mail it for me when you get inside the Confederate lines?"

"Of course, it'll be a pleasure."

"It might be dangerous for you to post that," Corliss objected, "and if you—"

Unaware that the door of the headquarters room had opened Cary said heartily, "That makes no difference, I'm going to do it anyhow."

Both men stiffened at seeing Major MacKenny's pudgy features at the door and their conversation ended as Corliss held out his hand.

"Well, good luck, Cary, and give them hell."

As he turned towards the door Cary briefly wondered why an evil smile flitted over his enemy's face, but so filled with anticipation of the raid was he that he swung off down the corridor and forgot about it.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTO ENEMY TERRITORY.

STILL sharply delineated in Captain Hubert Cary's mind was the scene which had taken place some two hours back when the raiders, having ridden quietly out of Harper's Ferry at six of the morning, had separated on the banks of Opequan Creek.

What a varied group they had made. Among the raiders were half a dozen stalwart souls masquerading as Maryland boys in homespun jeans on their way to enlist in Jeff Davis's army. Equipped with perfectly forged travel orders there were also four "guards" in Rebel gray who had talked in low tones with six Federal "prisoners" who, stripped to shirt and breeches, were so dirty and unshaven as to perfectly resemble the genuine article.

Among those shabby pseudo prisoners had been Tatnall, the veteran sergeant, lantern jawed and caustic as ever, and the irrepressible Corporal O'Leary, he who with Blake had brought Captain Walters's lancer troop to rescue him at Philomont. The Confederate "guard sergeant" was none other than soft-spoken, loose-jointed Sergeant Raines. Cary and three others posed as civilian army contractors on their way to Richmond.

Yes, that had been a solemn moment when the raiders' escort had disappeared with the spare horses in the direction of the threatened citadel and had left the twenty adventurers alone under threatening gray skies.

According to plan the guards and their prisoners were to march to a water and wood station called Knolls' Forks, a point but recently evacuated by Federal troops. The recruits were directed to separate and to board the 8:15 local for Mount Jackson in Winchester. Meanwhile Hubert Cary, an expert fireman, and a pair of tobacco chewing ex-locomotive engineers who spoke with a convincing Kentucky drawl would proceed on foot to a stock ramp and a single side-track, dignified with the name of Bellew's Crossing.

It had been an immense relief to Cary that, on boarding the pathetically dilapidated local, he noted the six prisoners and their four guards safely aboard and squatting in a day coach already filled to overflowing with refugees, invalided gray soldiers and Confederate officers on detached duty.

Not a glance did Tatnall and Raines exchange with the four prosperously dressed contractors who, gold watch

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chains ostentatiously aglitter, swayed through their car in search of seats. Nor did any of the other five blue clad prisoners interrupt their cursing of the luck which would shortly land them within the dreaded walls of Libby prison.

Conversation, except of the most innocent sort, was by pre-arrangement taboo, but at times the clatter of the appalling bad equipment made it possible for Cary to exchange a covert word with First Sergeant Brady, chief of the raiders' intended engine crew.

"How far to Winchester?"

"About two miles now, I reckon, sir. 'Pears like we-all is having luck so far," he added.

Cary peered anxiously out of the grimy windows a minute. "I'll agree if that damned rain doesn't begin falling. How's your courage?"

"Fine, sir. Young Shelton looks a bit scary, though."

And well might Shelton look frightened, Cary reflected. At this moment he was but one of fourteen spies riding steadily farther into a violently hostile countryside which swarmed with enemy troops. Let but one man of the raiding party betray himself or lose his nerve and—a trifle uncertainly Hubert Cary's hand crept up to test the flowing polka dotted blue tie which sprouted from the front of a none-too-clean paper collar. A rope wouldn't be half so comfortable.

CLACKETY-clack! Clackety-clack! The car wheels thumped and bumped on over the uneven and long unrepaired roadbed of the Winchester & Potomac. That fat old woman across the aisle had fallen asleep and her immense double chin was quivering to every jolt, in unison with an impossible purple geranium on her hat. Beside her an aristocratic, gray haired artillery major snored softly.

Anxiety again began to creep ratlike into Hubert Cary's brain. Would the others of his party fail to reach their destination? Two of those "recruits" were expert firemen and the other four were masters of the gentle art of lifting a rail from its cross ties and of twisting it into curves that could only be removed in a foundry.

"Reckon it's 'bout half a mile to Winchester, sir." Brady spat accurately at an overflowing cuspidor set in the aisle.

"You certainly know this line."

"Oughtter. Run on her, fireman and engineer, near five years."

Further conversation was prevented by a prolonged aria on the locomotive's whistle. At once couplings clattered and clashed like a cartload of scrap falling down a chute, and the cars lurched more heavily as the local began to slow.

"Win-ches-tuh! Win-ches-tuh!"

A brakeman with a tobacco stained gray waistcoat and imposing side whiskers opened the door and a gust of wood smoke promptly went whirling down the aisle.

"All off for Win-ches-tuh!"

The conductor, resplendent in a red and white checked shirt, an old plug hat and blue jeans stuffed into cowhide boots, came swaying along and skillfully avoiding the mounds of luggage stacked in the aisle. He paused to stare down at Cary and his companion.

"Hey, mister, let's see yo' ticket."

What was wrong? A tiny cold barb of fear pierced the heart of the young man with the short red sideburns.

"Mount Jackson? End o' the line; um, I see."

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The train creaked and rattled like a barn door in a gale as it came to an abrupt and panting halt. What a big crowd there was on the platform—lots of soldiers in butternut and gray, several of them wounded, women craning their necks, calling, waving good-by—a little Negro vending pies and candied yams.

The local's brakeman unclamped the brakes of each car and the locomotive whistled a warning of imminent departure, but there was no sign of the "recruit" party. Hubert Cary was becoming alarmed when he spied the six missing men quietly settling themselves in the first car behind the locomotive.

With that weight off his mind he returned to his seat and fell to counting the little bridges over which the south bound train was speeding.

Kernstown and Newtown flashed by, then an enormously long bridge over Cedar Creek and Brady abruptly aroused himself to nudge his superior.

"This here is one o' the main ones," he whispered. "It'd take the Rebs at least three weeks to rebuild it."

AT Strasburg Junction Brady got out to stretch his legs, and while the Pocahontas, that iron steed which was hauling the train, took on wood and water with help of many loose jointed Negroes, he exchanged the time of day with the locomotive's unshaven and oily crew and learned a thing or two worth knowing.

Once the journey towards Mount Jackson was resumed Brady leaned over and murmured, "Got the schedules for the Manassas Gap line along with the reg'lar schedule on this route, sir. Say, what's the matter?"

"That!" Suddenly tight-featured, Hubert Cary pointed at the window-pane where rain was commencing to draw irregular pale lines through the dirt upon it—fine, persistent rain of that sort which heralds a prolonged downpour. "Hope that lets up soon; otherwise we're sunk."

"Yep," was the big first sergeant's somber reply, "I've noticed that wet wood don't burn so well."

On and on through the rolling Shenandoah Valley the Pocahontas drew her train of ten rickety day coaches, and proportionately the number of passengers diminished until only a scant fifty or sixty weary travelers remained on the jolting local when it crept out on a tremendously high trestle.

"North Branch bridge, sir," Brady whispered, his lean jaws working with excitement. "This oughtter be our first job."

Before Cary could reply the coach was plunged into a sepulchral darkness for, like another bridge they had gone over, it was covered. He took advantage of the darkness to shift his pistol to a coat pocket. Too bad that, outside of the muskets of the four guards, it had been impossible for the would-be raiders to carry long-range side arms.

On emerging into daylight again the train ground around a long curve and the engineer whistled imperatively, whereupon the local's eight brakemen ran out into the smoke and rain to tighten the shoes.

"Be there in a minute now," Brady announced tensely.

Hubert Cary, as he watched a succession of dripping telegraph poles drift by, gradually became aware of a tight feeling at the base of his stomach. In a very few minutes now the friendly cloak of disguise must be thrown aside and their nearest refuge would be seventy long miles away. Seventy miles which must be made despite rain, pur-

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suit or interception. Seventy miles in which three major and several minor bridges should be burned.

"Mount Jackson! End of the line! All off!"

Creaking and groaning, the local pounded over a switch, turned off to the right and came to a halt before a big freight shanty set amid a desolate scattering of unpainted houses surrounded by gloomy pines.

"All off! All off!"

A tingling became evident in Hubert Cary's fingertips when, on descending to the platform, he beheld four stalwart Confederate sentries. Leaning on bayonetted rifles they carefully eyed the crowd while cursing the rain which had risen to a steady downpour that drummed like febrile fingers on the roof of the shanty.

QUITE calmly Cary crossed to a letter box and in it deposited Major Corliss's letter. Good old Corliss, he'd been a trump when that swine MacKenny was making trouble; some day soon they'd have to have a show-down.

As prearranged, the three groups of raiders paid not the least attention to each other. Sergeant Raines, cursing with remarkable fluency, demanded to know where to find the provost to whom he must turn over his prisoners. The "recruits" mingled with some passengers about to set out for a saloon just behind the station.

Sergeant Tatnall, shivering in his shirt sleeves, cursed the "Sunny South" from Florida to Georgia with such feeling that a passing mule skinner halted his team and listened in rapt admiration.

"Listen to that damn Yank cuss," he chuckled to his companion. "Uster reckon I could cuss kinder fancy, but he sho' puts me back 'mongst the recruits."

As for Cary, he halted on the platform with Brady at his elbow to watch the bell funneled locomotive swing on around the loop and stop to take on wood and water.

That tight feeling in his throat increased when, through the slanting rain, he at last beheld the Pocahontas's headlight bearing back towards the station.

"How about it?" Cary queried.

"Not yet," the engineer warned in a breathless undertone. "In a minute her crew get off to liquor up and eat; then'll be our best chance."

From a little shanty beyond the locomotive some trainmen sauntered out. One of them yelled up to the Pocahontas's engineeer.

"Have a good run, Gus?"

"Tol'able. Ol' Pokey hain't a bad enjine, but she ain't goin' to like it goin' back; wet rails makes the haulin' mighty hard on that Woodstock grade."

Brakemen, lunch pails swinging, clambered down from the train and the engine crew followed suit until, panting like a tired horse, the locomotive stood quite deserted.

An elbow nudged Cary and, in spite of himself, he caught his breath before he nodded imperceptibly and pulled from his pocket a little silver whistle. One blast he blew and then things began to happen very fast in the vicinity of Mount Jackson station.

STARTLED and bewildered shouts arose on the rain sodden platform at Mount Jackson when, quite without warning, the six "prisoners" and their "guards" hurled themselves upon the startled gray sentinels. All but one was promptly disarmed, but

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he, leveling his musket at Tatnall, fired hastily but missed and sent his musket ball smacking into the body of a young woman who was standing farther down the platform. Without a sound her crinolined form collapsed on the wet bricks and her small round hat rolled out onto the track.

Meanwhile the six gawky "recruits" drew revolvers and came bounding back across the road while the civilian population of Mount Jackson looked on a moment in helpless, wide-eyed amazement and then scattered like a flock of chickens at the approach of a hawk. Three of the raiders dashed into the telegraph office and with the butts of their heavy Colts promptly smashed to atoms every key within sight while the operator, white to the lips, was backed against the wall by the menacing revolver of a fourth.

Gary, accompanied by Brady and the two firemen, raced across the tracks to the Pocahontas and scrambled up into her cab, while at their heels dashed the "guards" and the "prisoners" who, having disarmed the genuine Confederate guards, had locked them in a tool shed.

"Cut her in the middle, Collins!" yelled Brady, leaning far out into the rain. "Tatnall, you tend to that train crew in the shanty!"

An ever swelling tumult now reigned in Mount Jackson.

Standing in the beating rain and signaling with his revolver, Cary directed the uncoupling of the last four day coaches thus leaving but three boxcars attached to the Pocahontas and her tender. Aware that each passing second brought failure and disaster nearer, Collins and his men were working like mad to unset the brakes.

"Hurry! All out!" Cary's deep voice summoned those raiders still engaged in wrecking the telegraph office.

In another minute he'd have to leave them if they didn't appear, for on the muddied main street of the village now had gathered a menacing mob composed of soldiers on furlough, villagers and boys; now they came surging forward, waving shotguns and shrieking.

But what far more disturbed the red-headed leader was to see a man on a powerful horse go pounding off down a road which, for a short distance, paralleled the track of the Winchester & Potomac. Was he headed for some near-by military telegraph.

Now the last of the "prisoners" and "guards" were scrambling into the rearmost boxcar while others of their number leveled revolvers at the train crew which stood lined up by the right-of-way, mouths still full of lunch and hands in air.

"Let her go!" Cary snapped the command when a fusillade of shots rang out from behind the station and bullets whined by his head. The Pocahontas puffed and the couplings tightened noisily just as the "recruits" came dashing out of the station. Hands reached down from the boxcar doors to help the tardy ones aboard, that much Cary saw before he swung up the steps leading to the locomotive's cab.

"Thought you was a goner!" Collins, the relief engineer, extended a grimy hand. Brady, eyes white in his face, opened the throttle wider and a brief volcano of smoke and sparks spouted from the huge bell-shaped smokestack. The Pocahontas quivered, then her driving wheels, accelerated too quickly, slipped on wet rails and began racing. Nearer dashed the clamoring mob, braver now that the enemy was in flight.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

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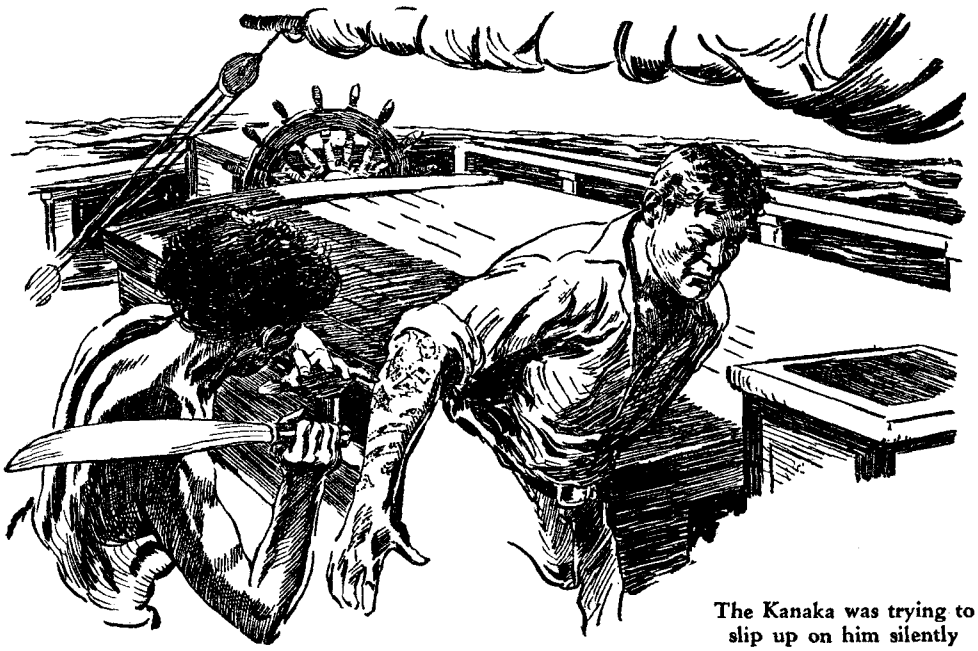

The Kanaka was trying to slip up on him silently

Terror Island

By RALPH R. PERRY

Author of " The Accomplice," " Spearhead," etc.

That South Seas island was a place of mystery and danger—so Bellow Bill Williams was in all the more hurry to get there

CHAPTER I.

THE CRIPPLED LION.

BELLOW BILL WILLIAMS had been loafing in the little port of Marobe, on the southwestern coast of New Guinea, for three weeks previous to the arrival of the mail steamer. Nothing whatever happened, which was altogether usual and right for the port and the season of the year. Nothing ever did happen in Marobe except surise and sunset.

Even the coming of the mail steamer served merely as an excuse for all white men to get drunk, which was customary and normal. And yet—three hours after the ship docked a trader offered Bill full steamer freight rates to take a cargo of hardware to the Marshall Islands, twelve hundred long sea miles away.

A pearling schooner, such as Bellow Bill owned, isn't ordinarily chartered to carry cargo. Not at steamer rates, and there was no more market for hardware in the Marshall Islands than in Marobe. It looked to Bill as though some one had suddenly decided it was worth money to get him out to sea, which for Bill was the best of all reasons for staying right where he was. He told the trader he couldn't possibly sail before sundown, as de-

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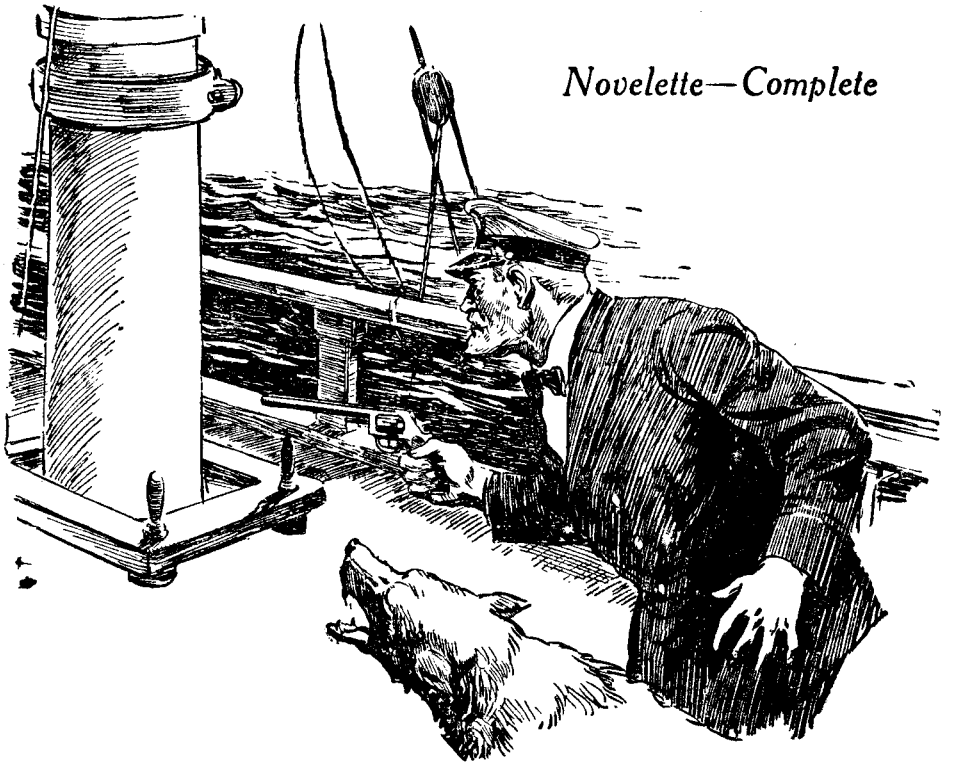

Novelette—Complete

manded, and sauntered over to the nearest bar to ponder the wherefore and the what-the-hell.

He had barely tasted his stengah when a beach-comber came reeling through the door and jostled against his elbow.

"Who're you pushin', you big blighter?" screamed the drunk. He snatched Bill's glass from the bar and hurled the contents into the pearler's face.

Half blinded, Bill twisted his left hand in the breast of the drunk's coat and lifted him off the floor. A huge, tattooed right fist snapped back—and paused. The drunk had shut both eyes. His face was pallid and drawn with terror as he awaited an annihilating blow. Held like a puppy at the length of Bill's great arm, his punches and kicks were ineffectual, half-hearted.

Bellow Bill stood six feet three. He weighed two hundred and forty, every pound sea-hardened muscle. From neck to waist and from wrists to shoulders tattooing covered his skin in designs that were Polynesian, Melanesian, Chinese, and European—a record of his travels and his experience at sea and in the jungles. A bullet scar, one of many, was visible on his arm.

And yet a drunk, with a roomful of men to pick a fight with, had selected him? Not likely. Not naturally, nor out of liquor or bravado. Rather to earn a five-pound note by taking a beating.

The pearler lowered the drunk to the floor.

"Run along, bozo!" Bill rumbled in the deep voice that had the echoing growl of distant thunder or of storm-driven surf. A constable was peering

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through the barroom door, a truncheon gripped in his fist. Marobe, on mail ship days, is well policed. Barroom brawlers land in jail.

Bill grinned, and thrust his cap farther back on curly, coppery blond hair.

"No trouble, constable!" he boomed mockingly. "Nothing but an accident—as this gentleman will explain!" Bill tossed a sovereign to the beachcomber. "Buy yourself a drink you'll be able to enjoy, bozo!" he rumbled, and strode out past the constable. Some one, he reflected, would be as well pleased to have him in jail as at sea.

With a trace of a grin Bellow Bill filled his mouth with the fine-cut chewing tobacco he carried loose in his hip pocket. Marobe might seem as dead as ever—but it wasn't. Indolently and carefully Bill looked over the harbor. Near the mail steamer a small, dirty trading sloop was preparing to put to sea. The blocks squeaked as the sails were hoisted.

Bill's own pearling schooner was moored alongside a long, rickety pier three hundred yards farther up the beach—and there was a stranger already aboard it! Over the taffrail projected a yachting cap, snowy white and ornamented with gold. Bill swore aloud. Not even an admiral had the right to board his vessel uninvited. He set off at a run.

As his feet pounded on the loose planking of the pier the intruder rose. The man was tall. A close-cut Vandyke beard, white as wool except near the lips, where it was stained with tobacco, concealed his features. Dark-brown, level unwinking eyes stared at Bill. In his prime the interloper had possessed Bill's breadth of shoulder, and almost his depth of chest. Though age had wasted the muscles, the set of the shoulders and the indomitable lift of the chin were unaltered.

The man was lionlike—and against his hip pressed the most enormous dog that Bill had ever seen. The shaggy gray head was leonine, and despite the heat the tongue did not loll. The dog was as calm, as masterful and self-possessed as the man.

"Bellow Bill Williams?" he inquired.

"That's me. And what the devil are you doing on my schooner?" Bill rumbled as he leaped to the deck of the boat.

The dog growled. The bearded man reached under his coat. Into sight flashed a double-barreled pistol, a foot long, the barrels chambered to shoot shotgun shells loaded with buckshot. The man held it level at his waist.

"Watch him, Puck! Watch!" he commanded the dog with icy calm.

Again, more urgently, the beast growled. The shaggy gray head turned slightly.

It was that movement more than the almost noiseless rush of bare feet along the pier which warned Bill. He whirled, crouching with a fighter's instinct. Almost at his shoulder he glimpsed teeth bared in a snarling black face, the bushy head of a Papuan, the gleam of a heavy wood knife drawn back to strike.

BELLOW BILL threw himself backward. The wood knife hissed over his head. The black stumbled over his body, and fell. The dog uttered a blood-curdling growl as Bill rolled upon his assailant. A huge tattooed fist smacked against the back of a sinewy black neck. Bill snatched the wood knife from black fingers that were suddenly limp and swung it like a scythe—against thin air.

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Though the dog's teeth were bared, it still crowded against the hip of its master. Though the buckshot pistol was leveled at Bill's head, the man did not fire.

"Bellow Bill?" he demanded, fierce and urgent.

"Me!" Bill boomed. "Damn you, stranger, if you ain't after me, why the hell didn't you pop off that black?"

"Down, Puck!" the man commanded. "Because I'm blind," he added icily. "You're lucky that I didn't blaze away, I think. All I knew was that the dog warned me a man was running toward me threateningly. Did you knock out that Papuan?"

"How'd you know he was a Papuan?" Bill boomed.

"I smell the grease in his hair. The same old stuff." The double-barreled pistol was lowered. "You don't recognize me, I perceive. I'm Atterson. The blind hulk that used to be Nick Atterson!" He spoke with the quiet irony of the strong man, accustomed to power, who has become a helpless cripple.

"Golden Nick Atterson, eh?" Bill rumbled. "If we've never met, we've worked together!" All the pearler's preconceived ideas underwent a sudden and violent alteration. He had nearly—he grunted to think how nearly—hurled the knife point-first into Atterson's chest.

Only the cool head and the quick wit that Bill carried into a rough and tumble fight had saved him from cutting down a man who had not come to attack him, a blind man who had drawn a pistol only to defend himself—and who, with a murderous struggle in progress, had possessed the courage not to shoot at random, who had even restrained his dog. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have filled Bill with buckshot.

"Is it in the Marshall Islands you want me, or jail?" Bill snapped.

"What? I don't understand. Neither," Atterson replied. "I want you to take me to Utuoa and be my eyes and my right hand and my bodyguard, Williams.

"I heard a sloop hoisting sail. Is it standing over this way?"

"About two hundred yards off."

"Then duck below. Get your head down!" Atterson commanded. "Down, Puck!"

In his voice was urgency and the thrill of imminent danger. The big dog flattened himself against the deck, and Bill, too good a leader of men himself to refuse to take an order, was as prompt.

Atterson, however, remained erect, merely turning to face the sloop. The bearded lips parted in a snarl. The Papuan, unguarded, rolled off the deck and swam feebly toward the oncoming vessel.

"Let him go," Atterson whispered. "He was a tool, sent by his master to kill you because I wanted you. No more responsible than Puck would be if I told him to tear the throat out of a stranger. Do you see a white man on that boat, Bill? A small man with a hooked nose and a scar on his forehead shaped like a cross?"

"Nothing but Papuans," Bellow Bill reported. "There's a woolly headed black as big as a house, and a shriveled-up witch doctor."

"Then Clipper Clarke is hiding behind his natives—as usual," said Atterson savagely. "Don't get up, Bill. He's likely to have a rifle aimed through a porthole in the hope of a shot at you or the dog."

"And you?" Bill boomed.

"Not me. He's waiting for me to bring him a hundred thousand in gold

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—and my worn-out carcass," Atterson replied calmly.

A ROPE was tossed from the sloop and the Papuan who had attacked Bellow Bill was hauled aboard. The sails caught the breeze and as the sloop drew out of rifle shot Bill rose—eagerly, with his hunch become a certainty. Clipper Clarke he knew by reputation—the sole trader on a lonely island which was all green jungle and savage, splintered black volcanic rock. An island which white men called Utuoa, but which the Papuans, who knew better what went on there, termed Terror Island, and avoided like the plague.

Of Golden Nick Atterson, Bill knew far more. Atterson had been one of the first adventurers to come to the South Seas. Besides courage, he possessed a gift for organization, the instinct for trade which makes a great business man, and a sense of fair play and a loyalty toward those whom he hired which drew and held men like a magnet.

Though Bill had never seen Atterson before, he had worked off and on for years for Atterson, Inc. Atterson's company had given him the tip that a new pearl bed had been discovered in York Bay. Atterson's company, when his schooner had been wrecked, had let two years go by without pressing him for the payment of principal or interest, without even insisting that he work for them, like an ordinary shell diver. Bill had eventually repaid the loan with New Guinea gold. Atterson, Inc., was a white concern.

Bill glanced at the blind man. He understood why.

"Some one wearing shoes is coming down the pier," Atterson muttered. "A constable, I suppose. I'll send him away. Being owner of a big concern does have a few advantages."

A few words were enough. Atterson seated himself slowly on the taffrail. The huge dog Puck laid its great head on his knee.

"I came to Marobe to meet Clipper Clarke because I learned you were here, Bill," said Atterson at last. "A good many hundred in cable tolls that information cost. But I had a hunch—which has proven true. Clipper Clarke seems to share my opinion. Not a man in the South Seas can bring this stunt off. Except, possibly, you. Others would just try. And get themselves—and me—killed."

Bellow Bill spat over the rail.

"Long ago," said Atterson, "I pistol-whipped Clipper. I cut that cross on his forehead with the foresight. It's a mark of Cain. Some crimes are too foul and too mean to punish by death. Clipper's was the worst sort, and so is he. There's no need to go into details. I branded him and kicked him out, and in the course of time I forgot him. But he didn't forget me."

"He's boss and witch doctor and god to the Papuans on Terror Island," Bellow Bill rumbled. "They're afraid to spit without his say-so."

"Exactly. There's no limit to the evil a clever, vicious white man can accomplish among savage and superstitious blacks on a lonely island," Atterson agreed. "He's like the master of a pack of dogs. Remember that. For years I've been too high for him to reach, but six months ago he had my only son kidnaped."

"Kidnaped him, you mean," Bill grunted.

"No, I don't," said Atterson grimly. "Clipper was too clever to act himself. My son Tom disappeared. A month later—after I had failed to

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trace him—Clipper sent me word that the wild natives on his island had a white boy imprisoned among them. It might be my son and might not. Oh, he was damn innocent—and helpful. He thought he could ransom the boy—if I would send him five hundred dollars to buy gin and tobacco."

"Not much ransom," Bill rumbled.

ATTERSON held up his hand. "Wait! Of course I sent the money. Nothing happened. Next month he informed me the natives wanted five hundred more." Atterson leaned forward and the pointed white beard bristled as he set his teeth. "I'm no fool. *I knew then that he never meant to send my son back.* He couldn't torture me, but he knew that I knew what happens to a seventeen-year-old boy in the hands of savage blacks. At best, hardship and disease and a quick death. At worst, a slow descent into bestiality.

"So—I burned the cables to locate you, Bill. I told Clipper to meet me here. He came. He knew I dared not touch him. My son's life was hostage for his, as he reminded me at the first word. I demanded upon what conditions he would release my son at once. And he laughed and said that if I would come to Terror Island with one companion and one only, with a hundred thousand dollars in gold, he would do—what he could."

"Frank scoundrel, ain't he?" said Bellow Bill calmly. "Implies he's going to give you the double cross, and dares you to come. To get the pistol-whipping repaid with interest, and bringing him gold enough for a getaway. Are you going, Atterson?"

"I must."

Bellow Bill looked up swiftly, and his blue eyes flashed in admiration of courage. Nevertheless, he spoke doubtfully.

"The wildest native on Terror Island would walk through fire if Clipper so much as crooked a finger, if half I've heard is true," he said. "If you fail Clipper won't give up your son. Easier to kill you both, and blame the 'wild' blacks."

"Exactly," Atterson nodded. "But could a gunboat or a regiment find my son before he was speared?"

"Why, no!" Bill boomed. The great voice rolled across the harbor and then dropped to the lowest whisper it could compass. "No, the job's for one man, but at that, Atterson, we've only the chance of a snowball. We can't shoot Clipper, or the kid will be speared. We can't plunge into the jungle, or we'll both be speared. I'll take a chance on ambush by unorganized natives, but I'd be a damn fool to expect to get through broken lava hills with a white man planning the ambuscades. And we can't just hand over the gold, or both of us will be *kai-kai'd,* and the kid too!"

"I've no plan," said Atterson. "I must go, that's all. I hoped—but—never mind. After all, we never met before. You've no children of your own—"

"I've a head on my shoulders, thanks to that dog of yours, and no buckshot in my hide, thanks to you!" Bill thundered. "Hell, I've never welshed on a brave man yet, but I'm not fool enough to trust altogether to the off chance! I'm not going to sail up and be killed. He has spies here; we've got to fulfill his conditions or he'll murder the boy. Clipper's afraid of me, and hungry for gold, but that's not enough to unstack the cards. Is there anything about you that he doesn't know?"

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"I'm not absolutely blind," Atterson answered. "That is, I can tell where the sun is if I stare at the sky, though more by the feeling of the sunlight on my forehead than by sight. I can shoot straighter than one might think by sound, and Puck here is beautifully trained. His nose might be worth more than eyes—"

"Clipper's seen the dog. Puck ain't long for this world," Bellow Bill rumbled grimly. "But if you can locate the sun—now *that,* Nick, may let us hit at Clipper from an angle he doesn't expect!"

CHAPTER II.

THE JOINT IN THE ARMOR.

FOR four days after returning from Marobe, Clipper Clarke sat in his bungalow on Terror Island, like a spider in the heart of a web freshly strengthened to ensnare important prey. He did not drink, and he ate sparingly. He was a tall, sinewy man without small personal vices. His teeth were white and small and set far apart. His lips were cruel, and the knobs and seams of the old scar left by the pistol-whipping seemed to belong upon his countenance, as though a Torquemada had inflicted one of his punishments upon himself in order to wither his last impulse toward mercy.

Through the huge Papuan named Tetio, who was his war chief, his last instructions went out to the hundred-odd bushy-headed savages who peopled the jungles and cliffs and pocked and riven slopes of black lava which was Clipper's empire. If a gunboat came, go here. If a schooner, a dozen spearmen must gather at this defile, another dozen there...

With the old witch doctor, Haupu, Clipper talked far into the still, hot nights. He was preparing to fight, not with crude force only but with craft. Occasionally the cross scarred on his forehead turned crimson at the memory of the failure to keep Atterson and Bellow Bill apart. They were both big men—big in more than body, and Clipper hated men who were successful, who possessed in their make-up a touch of grandeur, with all the venom of a mean, warped soul. That the trader feared Bellow Bill was not precisely true. He would merely have preferred an antagonist less redoubtable, an easier victory without the need of strengthening his web or perfecting his plans.

It was dawn of the fifth day when Tetio roused him with the news that the big tattooed man was sitting on the beach.

Clipper snatched up binoculars. His throat was hot and his brain raced at an announcement so unexpected. Three hundred yards from the bungalow Bellow Bill sat in the sand, calmly chewing tobacco. The pearler was naked to the waist, barefooted, the belt of his thin duck trousers empty of weapons—and there was no ship of any sort in sight by which he might have arrived.

Like lightning Clipper though of a wreck, and discarded the theory. The trade wind had blown steadily for days. Yet the nearest island was fifty and more miles distant.

Clipper buckled on a revolver.

"Come with me, Tetio," he rasped. "You, Haupu, be ready—with the others."

Bellow Bill grinned lazily at the sinewy trader and the huge black who advanced toward him. There was a wood knife in the Papuan's loin cloth, and he also carried an iron bar, slight-

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ly longer and heavier than a poker, with its end hooked and sharpened. Casually the pearler glanced toward the sea. Nothing was visible above the curve of the horizon, but far out the schooner was hove-to, drifting before the steady trade wind with Atterson and the dog.

Bill had fulfilled Clipper's conditions to the letter. Atterson and he had come alone. In the night the pearler had swum to Terror Island. At sunset Atterson would hoist sail and steer for the setting sun. The blind man would come near enough to the island for Bill to paddle out in a canoe and steer the schooner in if all went well. If not—if Atterson failed to hear Bill's hearty bellow—the plan was for him to put the schooner before the wind and run at full speed until some passing vessel answered his signals of distress.

"HOWDY!" Bill boomed at the tense, suspicious trader. "I've got three hundred and forty pounds of gold ingots consigned to you, Clipper! Better not cut off my head premature-like. I'm a living bill of lading. Show me you can produce Tom Atterson, alive and well and on the hoof, and I'll be back with the *dinero*. You can't really expect old-timers like Nick and me to take your word you've got the kid, now can you?"

"Move over. Sit down on the sand—there!" Clipper ordered harshly. He pointed at random to a spot twenty yards distant.

"Why, Clipper! I'm surprised!" Bill rumbled mockingly. "You don't suspect I've got a gun buried in the sand, do you? Not me! I'm a rotten shot!" Grinning, Bill moved to the spot requested and sat down, huge tattooed forearms across his knees.

"I've never said I had young Atterson," retorted Clipper bitingly. "But I think you'd better decide that I can get him and signal for the gold to be brought here. If you know what's good for you." The thin lips hardened. "Come out!" Clipper shouted in Melanesian, which Bill understood perfectly. "One man drive a pig past this big tattooed pig—quickly!"

In Melanesian there is a play on words between big pig and "long pig," which is roast human flesh. A score of savages stepped from the underbrush, headed by Haupu. A half-grown pig appeared almost at once and was driven, squealing, between Bellow Bill and Tetio. As it passed, the huge Papuan swung the iron bar like a golf club.

The sharpened iron hook ripped through the pig's belly. It squealed horribly and dropped by Bill's knees, kicking and spouting blood, not dead, not even to die quickly, yet too fearfully wounded to rise. A cold breeze seemed to blow against Bill's spine. Tetio swaggered and swung the sharpened hook within a foot of his face.

"That is the punishment I order for men who displease me slightly," said Clipper. "I think you'll agree I can produce Tom Atterson when I choose."

Bellow Bill's right hand moved. Not swiftly enough to threaten, yet quickly enough to seize the iron bar before Tetio could withdraw it. With a twitch of his shoulder Bill pulled the bar from the Papuan's grip, catching the handle in his left hand.

"Let's understand each other, Clipper," he rumbled. In the tattooed forearms muscles leaped up like the ridges in the trunk of an oak. The iron bar commenced to bend in his grip. From the savages came an awed murmur. Bill's voice went on, deep and unhurried, unaffected by the tremendous ex-

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ertion he was putting forth. The bar had become a loop.

"You can shoot me or have me speared, of course. I didn't come here unarmed because I'm a fool. The stakes are big enough on both sides to take some risk—and you don't see Nick Atterson or the gold until I see Tom."

The iron bar had become a spiral. Indifferently Bill tossed it at Tetio's feet.

"Bend it back, little man!" he boomed in Melanesian. "In Samoa men try which is the stronger by seeing which can knock the other down, but your master fears you are too small to face me—even though you strike me first." Bill grinned at Clipper as the savages murmured. "You can cheat, but you've got to play!" he added in English too swift for Papuan ears. "I'll see a hope of getting the kid back—or he and I'll be all you get. You're king here. Prove it."

"Break the jaw of the big pig, Tetio. Or go—you know where," said Clipper bitingly. His hand was on his gun. Bill, leaping up and bracing himself to receive Tetio's blow, saw the dark face turn greenish and then flush jet black with desperation. The contest was not one of boxing. Bill must stand with his arms at his sides and take a blow fair to the head or chest. He could only hold the point of his chin out of the way.

TETIO was immensely strong, and nerved by terror of failure to a supreme effort. In a hundred fights Bill had never absorbed such a punch. He kept his feet, but the beach whirled around him. For an instant the sky was black. He was conscious that he had staggered two yards backward, of the awed murmur of the savages. Tetio waited the return blow, the dusky head lowered to take the punch on the cushion of hair, six inches thick.

Like a wounded lion Bill gathered himself and leaped, shoulder and body lined behind his fist. He aimed for the jaw, but as Tetio ducked Bill's knuckles crashed against the temple. The punch lacked neither strength nor timing, but only an inch or two in direction.

Tetio's knees sagged. A gush of blood colored his lips, and he crumpled in his tracks. Panting, Bellow Bill stood over him, waiting through ten and twenty seconds for him to rise. The savages did not breathe. Clipper stood rigid, staring.

"You smashed his skull! He's dead!" the trader gasped, and jerked his revolver clear.

The cold wind blew down Bill's spine. He had hoped to master Tetio; to shake by a feat of strength Clipper's hold upon the natives. To rescue Tom was possible only if the Papuans learned to fear Bill himself but little less than their master. They feared him. Their eyes rolled, but none the less he had succeeded too well. The death of Tetio was too great a blow to Clipper's prestige. He must assert his ascendency at once, and at any cost.

Bill looked the trader in the eye.

"Is it worth a hundred thousand gold?" he challenged over the level of the revolver.

He won. Clipper did not fire.

"Want to see the kid? You'll see him!" the trader snarled. Passion was shaking him. "Stand still, or I'll drill you and to hell with the gold!" he gasped hoarsely. "Haupu—make the curse—the Great Curse!"

The Papuans caught their breath, and the sound was like the hiss of a

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gust of wind through palms. The witch doctor ran forward with a thin, shrill scream. In front of Bill he dropped on hands and knees and commenced to crawl in a circle that grew narrower and narrower. The muscles of the sorcerer's back began to twitch. He writhed on his belly, like a snake, round and round.

This was all mumbo-jumbo. But—was it? The Papuans who stared at Bill expected him to die. He could read the conviction that he was doomed in eyes that were all whites and the greenish-ashen pallor of the circle of faces. The witch doctor believed he would die, and over the leveled gun Clipper was planning death—at the proper time and place. Native magic, Bill thought steadily, had—seldom had—any effect on a white man. But there was no mumbo-jumbo about Clipper...A young boy in the jungle. An old man, all but totally blind, tossing at sea...

The spasms that shook the witch doctor ceased. He lay at Bill's feet rigid, like a dead man.

"Now—will you signal in the gold, or do you want to go find Tom?" Clipper whispered softly.

"Tom's what I came to find!" Bill boomed. The nerves in his back crawled, but his face and voice were unmoved, defiant, as though he felt able to smash menace of any sort by one blow of his fist.

CHAPTER III.

THE JAIL WITHOUT BARS.

AT a sign from Clipper the savages converged upon him from three sides. None of them touched him. Despite their clubs and spears, they kept beyond the reach of Bellow Bill's arms, but they drove him toward a path that led away from the sea as they would have driven a fierce animal of which they were individually in terror.

As soon as Bill guessed where they wished him to go he strode ahead without compulsion, neither slowly nor in haste. Clipper and the revolver were never far behind, and the pearler saw neither the opportunity, nor the use, of making a dash for the shelter of the jungle.

The path climbed steeply up an ancient flow of lava that was like a road of rough black glass. Five hundred feet above the sea Bill came to a narrow gap in the rim of the ancient crater. The walls of dark obsidian rock on either hand were hardly twenty feet apart, and the creek which had flowed along the left hand side of the path all the way from the sea was no longer visible, though he could hear its murmur as it dashed through a subterranean channel.

Brush grew in the cleft between the cliffs. A dozen men might have held the pass against an army, but there was no reason which Bill could perceive why the savages should suddenly halt in their tracks and stare at him as though he was as good as doomed. With a thin smile Clipper raised the revolver to urge him on.

Bellow Bill looked doubtfully at the ground ahead. The flow of lava upon which he had walked thus far broke at the inner rim of the crater. To go farther he must jump down about five feet and cross a funnel-shaped pit about a hundred feet in diameter and fully forty feet deep which seemed to have been scooped out of a loose soil composed of volcanic ash, grayish black in color, and filled with blocks and bowlders of porous, steam-blown pumice.

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Directly opposite him was the lava flow, about five feet thick, also broken short off. The lava must have flowed across the soft soil before there was a pit. The ground had dropped away, leaving a bridge of lava, which had broken—and disappeared, except for a section about ten feet long which was visible in the very bottom of the funnel, tilted sidewise, as though it were sinking too. Beside the black stone was a hole no wider than Bellow Bill's shoulders.

Not a blade of grass grew on the sides of the pit, though the murmur of the creek was still audible. As Bill looked, a bit of the dark gray ash broke loose halfway up the slope and slithered to the bottom. More ash and a stone or two joined the slide—but the ash rose no higher against the tilted black stone and the hole beside it was not closed!

"Tom Atterson's just beyond!" Clipper shouted raspingly. "I don't deal with the savages who've got him because I don't like the looks of their front gate. Go call on him, big pig, or run back through us! We're lining the path!" He raised the revolver and fired near Bill's feet. The bullet ricocheted from the lava with a banshee wail.

The shot was echoed by a shout from the opposite side of the pit. The bushes were parted by a white boy, blond-haired, and naked except for a loin cloth.

"Go back! Go back, stranger!" he yelled. "I've seen one man jump in there! I tell you—go back!"

"Back, hell!" Bill thundered. He made a running leap, as far toward the side and as high up the slope as he could manage. The boy must be Tom Atterson, and he was unguarded. To conquer the sliding ash Bill relied upon his enormous strength. Better that risk than a shot or a spear thrust if he tried to run the gauntlet behind.

HE struck the ash, and plunged knee deep. A pawing hand only scooped up dust. He fell, and all the earth around him commenced to move. He could not rise. He could not crawl. Hands and feet found no purchase. Inexorably he was carried downward, not swiftly, but he was utterly helpless. His feet touched the tilted block of lava. He twisted and seized the edge with his hands, but beneath his body the ash continued to sink. He was in the small hole which he had seen from above, hanging by the grip of his hands in an upright position. The sound of flowing water was loud in his ears.

Too late he understood that it was the creek, flowing beneath the roof formed by the bridge of lava fallen from above, which carried the loose ash away as fast as it slid from the sides. Bill kicked out with his legs, hoping to bring down tons of ash and choke the current. All his strength could barely stir the soft stuff around him. The ash continued to slide slowly, inexorably seeking an angle of repose.

The top edge of the tilted block was higher than he could reach, though the lava was rough enough to afford handholds by which he might pull himself up. To what? To stand in the sun, to be bowled over by the rocks which Clipper would roll down the sides of the pit upon him. In a flash Bill comprehended the diabolical sport afforded by the man-trap, and the awed stares of the savages who had realized what was in store for him.

Any poor devil whom Clipper disliked had the choice of running a gauntlet headed by Tetio and his iron hook—or of dodging about on a tilted,

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ten foot oblong of black lava until a pumice bowlder crippled him, knocked him off into the sliding ash which dragged him slowly beneath the block to drown in mud and water.

The bottom of the block was almost level with Bellow Bill's eyes. It was rough, like the sides, forming a roof about a yard square where the ash could not rest. Grimly and carefully Bill felt with his toes for the other blocks of lava which must lie beneath this one. He could touch nothing.

He looked up. Tom Atterson had gone. That hurt. The boy might at least have watched, even if he could do nothing. On the opposite side of the pit Clipper stood where the lava broke off. He held a bowlder in his arms.

"Climb up, Bill! You're strong enough!" he shouted. "The last fellow kept dodging half a day!"

"You go to hell!" Bill boomed.

"Well, you've got strong arms. You can spin the fun out if you like to hang there," Clipper taunted. He paused. "And, Bill—maybe I don't get the gold this time. But when you don't come back Atterson will come again, if he loves his son. With another companion. One that will give me less trouble than you did—and more fun. Think about that!"

"I am," Bill rumbled. "You win, Clipper. I'll take your regards to the devil!"

The huge shoulders twitched as Bill released his grip. His coppery yellow head vanished beneath the tilted block in a swirl of sliding, grayish-black ash. The men above saw the pit engulf him. They could not see his fingers hook into a crevice in the lava roof. Bellow Bill hung by his fingers alone. The ash was as high as his mouth. He had seemed to surrender, to choose the quickest death, and yet as long as his strength held out the choice had only moved him some three feet nearer the abyss.

CHAPTER IV.

TUPAPAKU.

THE strain upon his arms and fingers was steady and extreme, considerably greater than would have been the case if he had been hanging in mid-air. He heard Clipper shout across the pit, threatening to shoot if Tom Atterson did not go back. Grimly Bill reminded himself that neither friend nor enemy could reach him, yet the fact that the boy had at least made an effort heartened the pearler.

Tom Atterson did not persist. There was no second shout, no sound except the whisper of the ash sinking around Bill's body. His fingers ached. The temptation to pull himself back into the sunlight b e f o r e his muscles cramped was all but irresistible. He would have to reach for the edge of the lava block and hold himself by the pressure of his fingers against the rough stone while the ash dragged at him.

Bill wondered whether he could hold on with a lack of emotion and a detached impersonality which surprised him. Another man might have been hanging by his finger tips with sunlight and clean air and life a foot or so away while Bellow Bill Williams looked on.

Under his breath he counted. One—two—three—four. When he got to a hundred he would make a snatch at the edge. To emerge too soon would be fatal. Clipper must have time to go, convinced that Bill was dead, but the passage of time was slower, infinitely slower for the pearler. He reached one hundred, and began again at one.

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Counted to two hundred, trying to measure seconds; began at one, and got to sixty... Six minutes since he had vanished.

At sixty-two Bellow Bill snatched at the edge of the block. He had reached the limit of his physical endurance.

For a moment the sand covered his face. He thrashed desperately with his legs, for his arms could only hold him from sinking, not lift him. The ash dropped past him more swiftly. By inches his head neared the sunlight. He reached up, flattening his hands against the face of the lava. With his elbows hooked he could lift himself. Like a huge mole that paws into the open through dry earth, scattering the dust right and left, Bill clawed himself onto the top of the tilted lava block.

On one side of the pit a black Papuan leaped up with an amazed cry that was choked in the dark throat by the clutch of superstition and horror.

"*Tupapaku! Tupapa—*"

"Aye, *tupapaku!*" Bill roared.

He shook the dust from his hair and scowled threateningly. Though he was all but exhausted and still trapped, he felt a quick, fierce stir of hope. The savage whom Clipper had left behind as a sentry had believed him dead—and had seen him drag himself out of the earth.

Of all the horrible monsters in Melanesian demonology the most fearful are the *tupapakus*—the spirits of dead men who return to earth. These possess human malevolence, supernatural strength and cunning, and lack any soul or life principle that can be touched by weapons, because the spirit which animates the *tupapaku* has already been dispatched to the hereafter. The most vicious sharks, the devilfish that kills fisherman after fisherman and cannot be hurt by spears, are *tupapakus*. In animal form they are deadly, but the worst reappear in human shape.

At Bill's shout the Papuan flung down the spear that was useless against a spirit. He turned and ran headlong down the steep trail which led to the sea.

"*Tupapaku! T u p a p a k u !*" he screamed, fainter and fainter, to warn his fellow warriors against the menace from which he fled.

Bellow Bill grinned and reached for a mouthful of fine cut. Wanted to dominate Clipper's savages, had he? His lips twisted sardonically. Well, he dominated them right now—but Clipper's power did not rest altogether upon the natives, and Clipper wasn't going to go ga-ga from superstition. When **t h a t** panic-stricken savage brought him the news that a *tupapaku* was loose, Clipper would guess what had happened and come running.

FROM the opposite side of the pit came a gasp of incredulous joy. Tom Atterson leaned through the bushes. His face was working. He had been fighting to hold back tears, but in his hands he still held a long vine to the end of which he had attached a block of pumice. The vine was too stiff to throw accurately, but the stone, sliding down with the ash, brought the end within Bill's reach. Tom twisted the vine around a sapling, and the pearler hauled himself up the slope.

Even with the support of the vine he was unable to stand near the bottom of the pit. He had to haul himself along by the strength of his arms. Higher up, though the ash still slid, it was a little stiffer.

"I ran to get the vine when I saw you were caught," Tom explained ex-

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citedly. "But when I got back with it you were gone, and Clipper was going to shoot me—"

"Aye, aye, kid. You did fine," the pearler snapped. "You're fit to be Golden Nick's son, and that's enough for anybody. Think fast, now, kid. Clipper will be coming back. How'd you get across that pit?"

"I didn't. They lowered me from the cliffs on a rope. There's no place where I can climb out, either."

Bellow Bill glanced at as much as he could see of the circle of glassy obsidian, and nodded.

"You're alone?"

"They lowered an old woman to cook for me."

"And they could lower a couple of blacks to cut your throat too, eh?" Bill rumbled. "I could stay here with you and stop that, of course. But your old man's sailing back to the island." The pearler glanced at the sun, which was not yet at the zenith. "I gotta go back, kid. If Clipper hasn't hurt you so far, I don't think he will. You'd be a damned sight more apt to get hurt with me. You ain't a *tupapaku,* savvy? Stand by and keep cool and obey orders."

"But you can't go back!" the boy objected. "A vine will only reach halfway across the pit—"

"Halfway is enough, kid," Bill boomed. "I got an edge on Clipper that I won't have long, or again!" The big man stepped into the thicket. The muscles on the tattooed back bunched and writhed as he bent a sapling as thick as his wrist back and forth until the tough wood snapped. With vicious jerks he stripped the side branches off, and snapped the top over his knee. In less than a minute he had made himself a pole about ten feet long.

"I've a knife," Tom offered.

"So've I, kid!" Bill boomed. His face was set and his under lip outthrust. His eyes never left the opposite side of the pit for long. "This is faster!"

He broke and stripped a second sapling, and strode toward the pit with a pole in each hand.

"Have that vine handy!" he rumbled—and drove the right hand pole into the loose ash with all the enormous strength of his arms and shoulders. The tip sank three feet into the soil. Bill threw his weight against the pole, found it solid—and stepped out onto the treacherous slope. The ash slid from around his feet, but the pole was driven so deeply that it held firm. Bill leaned forward and drove the left hand pole deep, moved onward, and pulled the right hand pole loose—to drive it into the soil farther ahead, and advance another yard.

The center of the pit he avoided. Like an old man walking with two canes he moved around the rim, yard by yard. One pole was always buried as deep as he could thrust the point to hold him erect. Sweat runneled through the ash that coated his face. The great chest commenced to pant before he was halfway around the pit, but though his progress was slow, it was steady, and he did not slip.

At last he managed to reach out and catch the end of the broken lava flow. He hauled himself up to solid ground, hurled the two poles out of sight, and caught up the spear which the sentry had discarded.

"Don't you try that stunt, kid!" he called back warningly. The booming voice was lowered to a whisper. "You'd get tired! Stand by and trust to us! You'll see or hear from us soon after sundown—by dawn at latest."

The boy gulped and nodded.

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Bellow Bill strode down the black lava trail, his eyes searching the bush for an ambush. Thus far he had heard nothing from Clipper.

BEFORE he had covered half the distance to the beach, however, he became aware that a body of men were moving up the trail. The savages were calling and shouting to one another, and the nervous tension of the voices belied the words they spoke.

"Tari is not afraid!"

"See, Kooamua, Tari is not afraid!"

"We will all go with Tari!"

"Yes, we will all go!"

Bill hurried to a point where he could look down the trail for fifty yards, and hid himself in the brush. A Papuan advanced, step by step, and stood staring, his feet braced to run, and his spear waving as though every leaf concealed an enemy. This, Bill inferred, must be the brave Tari. Behind him were fully a score of savages, huddled together, spears waving like grass in the wind. When they came up to the leader, they stopped. When Tari advanced fifteen feet beyond them he stopped.

They were convinced, with the utter certainty of superstition, that they faced an enemy whom their weapons could not harm, who could not only kill with a blow of the fist, as they had seen for themselves, but who could strike them dead by a touch.

Yet they advanced. Even the terror of the pit could hardly have driven them against a *tupapaku*—a savage fears an unknown death ten times worse than the fate he has seen—but nevertheless they were obeying Clipper's orders. Bellow Bill gave a grunt of admiration, for the savages, and for the mastery the trader had achieved. Clipper himself was not present. Once sure of that, Bill sprang from his hiding place, and with a thunderous shout charged down the trail.

The Papuans scattered like sparrows. Tari, courageous to the end, clung to his spear, but he raced down the path with leaps a rabbit would have envied. The others stumbled over themselves to scramble into the underbrush. The path where they had stood was littered with spears and wood knives. Bellow Bill could have killed half a dozen men. He charged ahead without so much as striking at one. Clipper had remained behind. At the beach, therefore, or in the bungalow, was the only enemy worth encountering.

On the steep path the pearler covered the distance to the sea quickly—though not quickly enough to overtake Tari, whose yells, uttered every few yards, were Bill's best guide. Near the beach, however, Bill turned into a side path, guessing from its width that it led from the native village to the bungalow. The surmise was correct. There was no grove of palms around the bungalow. He caught a glimpse of the rusty sheet iron roof while dense jungle surrounded him, and swiftly formed the plan of charging up the veranda and facing the trader's revolver with his spear.

But it was not Clipper who confronted him. The path ended in a sunlit space, like a lane, about fifteen feet wide which led to the right and left. Directly in front was a hedge of green thorns, higher than Bill's head, and so thick that he could not see through it. Behind this rose the bungalow roof.

The pearler hesitated, uncertain which way to turn. In all the South Seas he had never seen a bungalow defended like this one. Even the narrow open space had not been cleared away

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in order that the breeze might help to keep the bungalow free of insects, for the outer edge of the lane was also formed by a thorn hedge. Whether an intruder turned right or left he was trapped between green walls through which not even a dog could have forced its way. He was forced to circle the bungalow before entering it.

Bellow Bill had had more than enough of strange paths, and traps. His hot blood cooled. He listened, drawing upon all his bushcraft to make sure no one was behind him. He thought not. There was not a sound from the bungalow, either, and the hope of obtaining firearms lured him on. He chose to turn to the right, and advanced slowly, prodding the earth in front with the point of his spear, watching for the trigger of a set gun, and alert for the smallest break in the green wall of the hedges.

HALFWAY around the bungalow he came to a gate in the inner hedge. It was also formed of thorn branches, dried brown since they had been cut, and lashed to a framework of poles. The gate was ajar—and through the gap Bill caught a glimpse of the paint-smeared face of Haupu, the witch doctor.

It was a glimpse only. Instantly Haupu ducked out of sight. But the gate remained ajar, though a push would have closed it.

Had Haupu been stricken with panic? Fleetingly Bill weighed the chances. That painted face had not been frightened, but vicious and eager. Few natives are good shots, but if Haupu had a gun—and there were undoubtedly plenty of guns in the bungalow—he could hardly miss the man who pushed the gate open.

Bill turned on his heel and retreated. Once in the shadow of the jungle he breathed more freely. That double thorn hedge had been planted for a purpose not solely connected with defense. A single hedge would have been protection enough, and Clipper had too firm a hold over his Papuans to need walls of thorn. Bill swore under his breath. Clipper's mind worked deviously, and the lack of physical courage which made him hide constantly behind his natives only made him the more dangerous. Meanwhile, however, Nick's approach to the island must be made safe. Bellow Bill turned toward the sea.

The beach, when he stepped upon it, was deserted. Even Tetio's body lay where it had fallen. The sails of the sloop, however, which was moored near the water's edge about three hundred yards from the pearler, had been hoisted and flapped in the trade breeze. Over the rail Bill glimpsed a woolly, bushy head.

As he looked a rifle flashed from a porthole. The bullet sped by him with a long-drawn hiss before he heard the flat *crack* of the shot.

With a heartfelt oath Bill jumped back into the undergrowth. He damned the caution, or the cunning, which had induced Clipper to leave most of his natives ashore while he patrolled the waterside—ready to cut off Bill's escape with Tom, in the event that the pearler had succeeded in releasing the boy, and also, as Bill reflected grimly, ready to intercept Nick Atterson.

Clipper did not possess the physical courage to risk a hand to hand encounter, but that circumstance only made the devious and scheming intellect of the trader the more dangerous. Nick must be warned somehow, or he might come blindly sailing into the point-blank range of Clipper's rifle.

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There were half a dozen outriggers drawn up on the beach—rude boats hollowed from a single log lashed parallel to prevent them from capsizing. All were equipped with triangular sails braided from coconut leaves, but their speed was distinctly problematical compared to that of the sloop.

Nevertheless, Bellow Bill shrugged. By helping the sails with a paddle he could shove an outrigger along pretty fast, and if he could lure Clipper far enough out to sea the trader could not fight by trickery. Nothing was to be gained by waiting for sundown, and Nick.

Bill burst from the bush and sprinted across the sand toward the largest outrigger.

Bullets whined around him and showered him with sand while he shoved the heavy craft into the water. He bent low, paddling directly away from the rifle, fairly lifting the outrigger from the water with each stroke. When Clipper exhausted the magazine Bill hoisted the braided sail and set a course as close as possible to the wind. The schooner was not in sight. Nick was at least ten miles offshore, and behind Bill a single native whom he recognized as the courageous Tari was trimming the sheets of the sloop to give chase.

CHAPTER V.

SEA STRATAGEMS.

WHILE the heavier sloop was getting away from the beach Bill gained more than a hundred yards. For the first two miles he was under fire, but even his broad back offered no easy target to a marksman who must shoot from a heaving deck. Clipper's best shot only punched a hole in the braided sail more than a yard over Bill's head, and the trader soon elected to save his cartridges for closer range.

During the first two miles, also, the outrigger gained on the sloop. Thereafter the relative position of the two remained unchanged—which may have puzzled Clipper, but which made Bill grin. Though the pearler continued to paddle, he calculated the amount of effort that went into the strokes to a nicety.

If he tired, Clipper was close enough to gain three or four hundred yards and shoot him.

But Bill did not tire. The shores of Terror Island were ten miles astern. Three miles ahead he made out his own schooner, hove to with only the peak of the mainsail hoisted. His great voice boomed across the sea like a trumpet call.

"Nick! Ahoy, Nick! Hoist all sail! Bring the wind on your port quarter, old-timer, and crack on! Steer for my voice!"

Far away the peak of the mainsail ran up to the masthead as the ears of the blind man caught the command. With a sail area far greater than that of the sloop the schooner turned before the breeze. Bill paddled with all his might to intercept it, bellowing words of guidance. Once aboard the larger, faster, and sturdier craft, he hoped to get between Clipper and the island.

Clipper saw the trap. The sloop jibed and ran for the shore before the wind, but if the trader hoped to escape while the schooner paused to pick up Bill he was soon undeceived. Roaring to Nick to crack on, the pearler paddled directly into the schooner's path. The great dog bayed a welcome. Bill stood up, caught the bowsprit as it stabbed

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over his head, and swung himself onto the deck as the bow of the schooner crushed the outrigger and rolled it under water.

"Is Clipper near?" Nick shouted. "Did you find Tom?"

"Yes to both!" Bill boomed. He seized the wheel, and under his expert handling the gurgle of water under the bow grew louder. "Your kid's fine, though Clipper had a devil's mess fixed for us!" he shouted jubilantly. "Get below with the dog, old-timer, where a bullet can't find you! Toss me up a shotgun and an iron belaying pin! I'm going to run Clipper down, and Lord! how I want to get my paws on the slimy devil! I'm a mean, wild *tupapaku* after its meat!"

Even so early in the race the eye of a sailor could judge that the schooner would overtake the sloop at, or nearly at, the shore of the island.

Nick stared ahead with a fierce wistfulness, and loosened the buckshot pistol in his belt. "I want to help," he pleaded. "I'll lie on the deck, and hold Puck down beside me. It's a good dog. I've sat here guessing where the sun was and imagining all sorts of hells. I can tell you, Bill, to-day has been the first since Joshua when the sun stood still in the heavens. Don't order me below!"

"Lie down, then!" Bill rumbled. He pushed the man and the dog to the deck behind the cabin skylight. "Hells? I hung to the roof of one, and that kid of yours snatched me out. There's a level-headed youngster, Nick. 'Stay and wait for us,' I said, and he stayed without a whimper. Clipper left him with an old woman and with nothing but water to drink, Nick.

"Once Clipper is scuttled we can get him out with a couple of hundred feet of rope."

"Thank God!" Atterson growled into his beard.

IN a low, rumbling voice that scarcely rose above the slap of water against the schooner's hull Bill told in detail all that had occurred since dawn. The shore of Terror Island drew near. The gap between the ships had dwindled to a few hundred yards. Clipper's rifle began to crack. Holes appeared in the schooner's jib and mainsail, and a splinter flew from the mast, but Bill only crouched on the deck.

After a dozen shots the trader must have recognized the futility of long-range fire. Abruptly the sloop changed course, slanting along the shore instead of heading directly toward it. By shifting the rudder so that the schooner would have cut across the angle Bellow Bill might have gained rapidly, but he only grinned.

Every trick of the South Seas was at the pearler's finger tips. He continued to steer over the same water through which the sloop had passed, and changed course at the same point. Sure enough, when he looked over the side he observed that he was now sailing just inside a hidden coral reef. Clipper had attempted to lure him where the schooner would be wrecked.

Both boats threaded through bosses and hidden knife edges of coral. Rarely was the water beneath the keels more than thirty feet deep. The shore was close at hand, but to land through the reef was impossible.

"Stand by for a ram, Nick," Bill warned. He held the shotgun by the grip, like a pistol. As he spoke the sloop unexpectedly tried to come about, was caught aback by the breeze, and turned her side to the schooner's bow. Behind the rail at the point where the collision would occur rose Tari.

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Clipper was invisible. He neither exposed himself nor fired. Beneath the jib Bellow Bill caught a glimpse of Tari's face, ashen with fear and dogged with purpose. The native stooped—and the two vessels struck with a crash that drove the schooner's bow deep into the sloop's side.

Bill charged forward. As he leaped to the sloop, Tari tossed an anchor over the rail of the schooner, locking the two boats together. Bill knocked the native sprawling with his fist. The sloop's deck was empty. Too late the pearler noticed the wire which ran across the planks, leading from the open companionway over the side. A detonating wire—dynamite—and Clipper was swimming toward the shore.

The deck of the sloop heaved and burst beneath the feet of the pearler. The roar of the explosion was like a blow on the head. He was thrown high into the air and splashed into the water, half stunned, momentarily paralyzed by the shock. Splintered planking rained down upon him. Bill let himself sink, from weakness as much as choice, and then struggled feebly toward the surface.

Tari rose beside him. Bill caught the native by the woolly hair. The man was unconscious, either because of the explosion or from Bill's punch. The sloop was a shattered hulk, already sinking to the water's level. The bow of the schooner was blown open. The stern was high, and the deck slanted sickeningly. It would sink too—bearing down the gold—into thirty feet of water.

Bill groaned. A child could bring that gold to the surface again. Grimly the pearler trod water, holding up Tari with one hand. Now was Clipper's chance to strike. His stratagem had succeeded; the explosion had robbed Bill of weapons and the advantage of position. Well beyond the ring of scattered wreckage Clipper was swimming strongly toward the shore. He had dropped the detonator with which he had exploded the dynamite, but over his shoulder was the rifle. He swam with the stock above water. Once on shore he would have easy targets.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TERROR.

BELLOW BILL was too shaken by the explosion to overtake Clipper in the water. There was, however, or should be, a faster swimmer at hand. The pearler shoved Tari toward the sinking schooner.

"Nick!" he called. "Sic the dog on him, Nick!"

There was no answer, and no barking. To a rifle duel between a poor shot like himself, temporarily able to find shelter behind the schooner's rail, but soon to be left floundering in the sea, and a reasonably accurate marksman such as the trader, Bill could see but one end. Nevertheless Bill hauled Tari across the rail, scrambled over the tilting deck, and dove down the companionway.

The cabin was full of water, but the rifles were in their proper place in the rack. A few strokes enabled Bill to seize a weapon. He swam to the companionway and scrambled out, throwing himself down behind the skylight where he had left Nick. Clipper was already running out of the shallows, shaking the water out of the action of his rifle as he went. Bill did the same.

He was the first to fire. He missed, but the shot made Clipper turn and run across the beach for the shelter of the jungle. Bill rested the rifle on the skylight and drew bead on the retreating

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back. He was sure he had the sights notched. He remembered not to jerk the trigger, which was his besetting fault. The bolt snapped before he was conscious that he had fired, but the only sound was the click of the firing pin on a primer spoiled by salt water.

Clipper broke into the jungle. His return shot smashed through wood and glass close to Bill's face. There was a pause, which Bill sensed instinctively was wrong, a brief break in rhythm as obvious as though a bass drummer had missed a beat, and then a second shot high over Bill's head.

"Bum shells in your gun too, eh, Clipper?" he rumbled. He had nothing but leaves to shoot at, and only six rounds left in the magazine. God alone knew how many shots that meant. Bill held his fire. He had been so sure that Nick and the dog had been killed by the explosion that he had not glanced to seaward, but in the silence a splashing sound behind him made him turn.

No wonder the dog had not barked! Puck held the collar of Nick's coat in his teeth. The head of the blind man lolled forward. The dog was straining to hold the nose and mouth above the surface, and though the animal swam powerfully, the weight of the big man was so great that progress toward the boat was by inches.

"Good boy!" Bill boomed. He slipped over the rail and drew Nick to the ship. Instantly Puck began to bark. From the shore a bullet sang over Bill as he raised his head too high.

"Good boy!" Bill repeated. "Now —go sic him! Get him, boy—get him!"

Puck barked furiously and put both paws on the rail to climb out beside his master.

"No, no!" Bill commanded in desperation. "Not here! There—on shore, Puck!" He pointed across the skylight, but Puck only barked the louder.

Nick's head stirred feebly on the wet planks, across which the sea was beginning to creep. "Sic him!" he whispered. "Go far, Puck—far!"

Puck pivoted in the water. His lips drew back in a snarl that bared two-inch fangs. Like a brown torpedo he swam under the stern of the schooner and headed for the land.

"I heard a shot. Clipper'll kill him!" Nick whispered feebly.

FROM the jungle the rifle cracked. Water leaped up less than a foot from the tawny brown head that drove toward the beach as though towed by invisible rope. Puck no longer barked. The mastiff breed is silent in battle. Into Bill's mind flashed the vision of the bared fangs at which Clipper must be peering over the foresight. As the trader aimed he must be wondering whether or not the cartridge would explode. That doubt was not easy on the nerves of a man who preferred that others face his enemies.

The thought came in a flash, as quick as a firing pin can fall on a damp cartridge. Bill rose on his knees, head and shoulders above the skylight, and opened fire on the green wall of the jungle to cover the advance of the dog. Two shots crashed into the leaves without a reply from the trader. Bill levered out a spoiled shell, and fired until the magazine was empty. Still no reply. Had Clipper found the nerve to wait till Puck leaped for his throat?

The dog was dashing through the shallows. He crossed the beach in three great bounds and plunged into the jungle—without drawing a shot!

"By the blue hells, Clipper ran!" Bill thundered. "When he missed the first time he ran!" The pearler dug his

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fingers into Nick's shoulder and held his breath, all ears.

For five, ten seconds—silence. Then a rifle shot and the blast of a shotgun that blended into a single report, a scream of human terror, cut off at its shrillest and hard upon it, a savage yell that changed from rage to a squeal of pain, and abruptly ceased.

"Two guns—and two men!" Bill exclaimed. "That can only be at the bungalow, and Puck got them both, I think!"

Out of the jungle, loud and triumphant, came the ringing bay of the dog. Nick lifted his head and whistled. Again there was silence, but this time a minute passed, and no Puck emerged from the jungle.

"I don't like that!" Nick whispered. "Puck would come to me if he could drag a leg!"

"There were two shots, and yet Puck didn't bark as though he had a bullet through him," Bill scowled. "Let's go see, Nick."

The schooner was sinking under their feet. Tari had recovered consciousness. Bill kicked him into the water, pulled Nick's buckshot pistol from his belt, and lifted the blind man onto his back. The three swam ashore and crossed the beach, with the Papuan slightly in the lead.

"Follow the dog's trail, and keep moving," Bill commanded menacingly.

Tari shuddered.

"Are you the *tupapaku* still, or did you send your spirit into the dog?" he muttered sullenly in Melanesian.

"Me one fella damned big *tupapaku*. Plenty big enough one fella man, one fella dog," the pearler rumbled gratingly. "You go ahead, or me be cross along you."

Cross, in *beche de mer*, is a very strong word indeed. Hurricanes occur because the spirits of air are cross with the sea; a murderer explains that he was cross with the victim. Tari closed his eyes slowly, and turned to follow the trail with feet that dragged. The bruised leaves and broken branches which had been left by the passage of Clipper and the dog were plain enough even to Bill, and yet after a surprisingly short advance Tari stopped dead.

THROUGH a break in the trees Bill saw the rusty iron roof of the bungalow. It had been nearer than he thought, and he ceased to wonder how Clipper had reached it ahead of the dog.

"Go on!" he ordered.

Tari faced him, much as he had stood at the rail of the sloop to toss the anchor. The dark face had the same dirty ash color.

"No!" he refused, and slowly shut his eyes. "Bush fella go here, he fall dead. Big curse all along here. You cross along me. Clipper cross along me. All the same, savvy? Clipper say, 'Tari, you throw one fella anchor, or I make you walk to see me at house.' I know I fall dead. I throw anchor, savvy?"

"Sounds like bad medicine, somehow, though it isn't too clear," Nick muttered. He whistled for Puck, and bent his bearded face to listen. The jungle was like a green tomb.

"Go on!" Bill ordered inflexibly. "If you don't I'll throw you into the pit up the mountain. That's the curse on the island."

Though the threat was a bluff, Bellow Bill knew that Tari would accept it at face value. Nevertheless the savage did not budge.

"No curse in pit. Only a devil," he insisted stubbornly. "Haupu put curse on you. You change spirits with dog—

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and look!" Tari stepped aside, pointing to the ground beyond. In the center of the trail, half hidden by a low bush, lay Puck, stone dead.

Bill knelt by the dog coolly enough, but as he examined the coat of the animal a cold wind blew on his spine. Puck had not been killed by a bullet. A buckshot had pierced one ear, and there was a lump on the great head which might have been raised by the butt of a rifle or a shotgun. These injuries were trifling. The dog's muzzle was covered with blood, but it was not his own. Most strange of all was the fact that though he lay in the trail, headed toward the sea as though he were obeying the summons of his master, his lips were retracted in a blood-curdling snarl of such unearthly ferocity that Bill was startled. Puck had snarled when he started after Clipper, but nothing to approach this.

The bungalow and the gap between the encircling thorn hedges where the sun shone were about fifty feet ahead. In the jungle the shade was cool—clammy cool.

"Nick, here's Puck, dead without a mark," Bill breathed. "I swear I don't like this! I was near this place before, and didn't like it then! Clipper's done for, I'm sure, and the savages are in the hills. That explosion on the sloop would be the last straw for them. But Tari here has more courage than most, and if he'd rather be tossed into that pit than go on—"

"Let me examine Puck," Nick answered, raising sightless eyes. "I trained him, and know him, Bill."

"Look him over while I go ahead," snapped the pearler. "I'm going into that bungalow. I'll be damned if I'll be outdone by a dog or scared by the mumbo-jumbo of a painted savage!"

Bill was turning away when Nick, reaching upward, caught and held him by his trousers.

"As you said, there was something. Something killed Puck," Nick insisted. "Wait!"

"Yeah, and the only way to find out is to go and meet it!" Bill boomed. He jerked his leg free.

"Puck had courage, Bill," Nick said softly. Bill halted, his under-lip outthrust. "I don't need more courage, Bill," Atterson went on, more softly still. "I can't get to my son alone, despite all you've told me. I don't care to lose another brave friend. You don't mind if I class you with Puck, do you?"

"Not me!" Bill muttered.

The jungle was very still.

NICK touched the dog's muzzle. His fingers lingered on the fixed snarl of the lips, and passed on to the coat.

"Puck's coat is full of thorns on one side," he said.

"That's natural!" Bill grunted. "The hedges are thorny, and so is the gate."

"These thorns didn't scratch. They are driven deep into the flesh—on one side only," Nick reported gravely. He picked a thorn from the fur, very carefully, and held it up. "Can you see traces of poison, Bill?"

"No!"

"It was there," said Nick. "Tell me, isn't there something odd about Puck's muzzle? I can feel that the muscles are rigid as iron, but—"

"The snarl's horrible, like nothing earthly."

"Then the poison that's been wiped off the thorn by the fur is a kind that produces tetantic convulsions. The smile of strychnine, Bill. It's a symptom. This poison can't be strychnine,

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though. It must be deadlier still if so small a dose killed a magnificent animal like Puck so quickly." Nick rose. "I wouldn't go into that bungalow, Bill," he urged gravely. "A deadly poison is there, and a means to use it."

"But Clipper may be only badly bitten. Unconscious or lying low."

"That's just it!"

"And if he crawls out while we're bringing Tom down the trail he'll ambush us yet," Bill boomed. "In I've got to go, Nick!"

The blind man stood motionless. Slowly he nodded, and sighed. "Yes, I guess so," he whispered. "But not at a run, Bill. Not recklessly."

Bellow Bill grinned. He reached for fine-cut, but his fingers left his pocket empty. Watching where he set his feet, he moved to the gap between the hedges and turned to the right. He had been this far before, with Haupu's malevolent eye upon him. So far he was safe.

The gate of dried thorn branches was still ajar. A grayish film covered the withered leaves and the bristling thorns. That might be dust, and might not. Clipper had rushed through the gate with a savage dog at his heels. Had he failed to close it in time—or didn't it close?

"Not recklessly, huh?" Bill muttered. "Nick, for once I'm glad you're blind."

The pearler walked to the jungle, broke off and trimmed a heavy pole. He loosened the pistol in his belt, seized the pole in both hands, and dashed at the gate. It was low. He pole-vaulted high above it and dropped on the far side, jerking the pistol clear.

Nothing happened. He stood in a narrow compound of bare earth, facing the open door of the bungalow. Across the threshold Clipper lay on his back, with Haupu tumbled across him. Their throats were not pretty to see. A thread of blood had trickled as far as the top step of the veranda. Puck had done his work well.

From the compound inside the thorn hedge the mechanics of the gate were revealed. A sapling was lashed to act as a spring and hold it ajar. From a pulley in the center of the gate a flexible wire ran to a stake and back to the bungalow. Bill pulled the wire. The gate swung shut, and opened again. Anything entering at that instant would have been cut by the thorns.

Bill scowled. His vaulting pole was outside, and he did not care to walk through that gap, though the space was wide enough if a man were careful. He stepped to the hedge and tore away the sapling spring, which he used to poke the gate wide open.

With his jaw set he returned to the house. Stooping over the bodies across the threshold, he lifted down the hanging lamp and sloshed half the kerosene across the floor. He struck a match and tossed it onto the oil. In ten minutes the bungalow would be a furnace, consuming all that lay under the sheet iron roof.

The remainder of the kerosene he used on the dried thorn branches of the gate, pausing to watch till the poisoned thorns were burning well.

"Okay, Nick!" he boomed. "They're dead, and I've set the place afire. Cremation is a cleaner funeral than that pair deserve, and the best antidote for scattered poison." The voice deepened to thunder. "You fella Tari!" Bill roared. "Go get one fella rope! Me no cross along you! Me no cross along any your brothers! Me go bury dog, put up big stone to hold down spirit of *tupapaku*, savvy?"

"Me savvy!" Tari yelped. His voice

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was shaking, but he proclaimed proudly, "Me never have fright along you! Tetio dead, me one fella chief now! I go!"

Nick appeared in the gap between the hedges, feeling his way with his feet.

"We'll have Tom down to the beach by sundown," Bill hailed. "With the natives to help me I can raise the schooner and the gold, and use planks from the sloop to patch the bow. It'll all be easy—now that this place isn't Terror Island any more!"

THE END.

The Mystery Sea

THE southeastern portion of the Pacific is one of the few parts of the world to-day which is still a mystery. There are few islands in these waters off the coast of South America, and the existence of even these few has been in constant dispute.

In 1687 Davis, the pirate, reported that he had seen a "high, fair land" in latitude 27, about 500 miles off this coast. Taking his word for its existence, the map makers marked it on the charts as Davis Land; but other mariners failed to find it.

In 1722, the Dutch admiral, Roggeween, decided to settle the question of its existence once and for all. He sailed along the twenty-seventh parallel, and on Easter Sunday, 1722, sighted what is now known as Easter Island. Thus it turned out that there was land on latitude 27; but it was so far from the position given by the pirate that the admiral decided it could not be Davis Land, and to this day, Davis Land has never been sighted again.

Since the admiral's discovery, there have been many strange tales about this part of the world. In 1802, a ship's captain reported that the islands of Sala-y-Gomez, 250 miles east of Easter Island, had been wrongly charted. Unable to find them at their given location, he had discovered them 300 miles further west. Other mariners discovered Sala-y-Gomez in its old position and no land at all in the new locality.

In 1912, a British freighter sighted land not far from the South American coast, where no land had been seen before. The figures of the ship's master had been checked carefully by the first officer, and their correctness acknowledged by the harbor authorities. A warship was sent out to look the new island over, and not only found no land in the position reported, but discovered there were no soundings less than 10,000 feet for miles around.

Then, just a few years ago, a modern liner on a round-the-world tour reported that she had passed directly over the position of Easter Island without finding any trace of it. The officers, all of them fully qualified men, had "shot the sun" daily, and each one made his calculations independently, comparing them later with the rest so that there seemed to be no chance of an error. A short time later a gunboat from Valparaiso found Easter Island in its accustomed position, and the natives reported no disturbance of any kind. So the Southeastern Pacific is still a mystery sea.

Ellen Stevenson.

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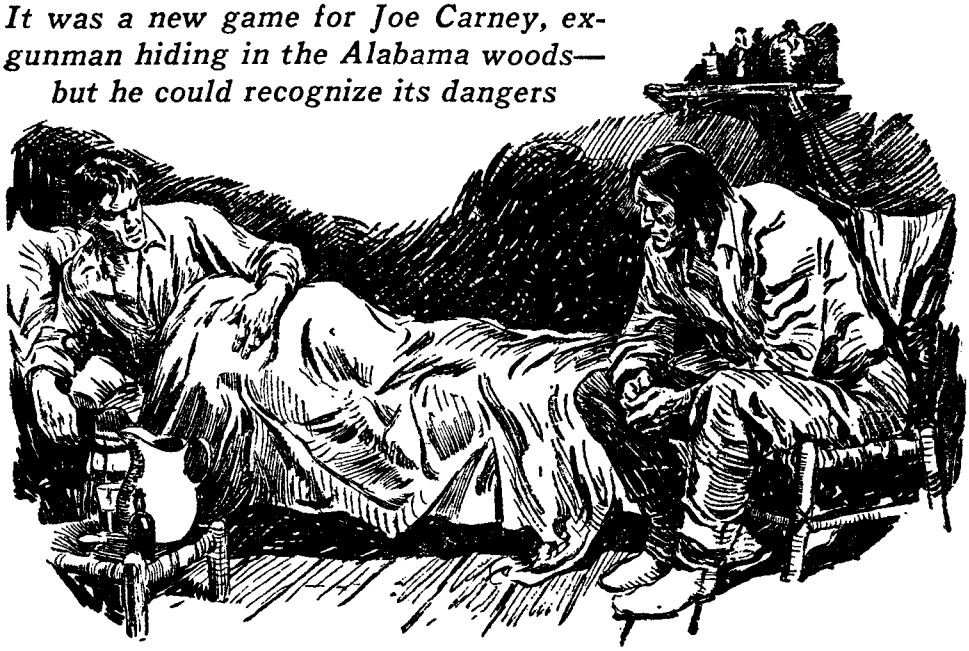
Green for Danger

By ANTHONY M. RUD

It was a new game for Joe Carney, ex-gunman hiding in the Alabama woods—but he could recognize its dangers



"Who paid you to come and kill me?" the Cajan demanded

THROUGH the driving sheets of rain big Emile Dupres saw the little man trying to hide behind the anise bush. Quick as thought the tall Cajan dropped full length to the palmetto, dodging the expected load of buckshot. Then he whisked away into the scrub, vanishing, circling to stalk the bushwacker, his black eyes narrow and the set lines of his harsh countenance revealing his far-off trace of Indian blood.

But no blasting explosion sounded amid the dripping aisles of the piney woods. The little man, shivering behind the anise bush, chilled to the marrow in spite of the humid warmth of the Alabama May, blinked rain out of his red-rimmed eyes and whimpered despairingly. The ridiculously large automatic pistol in his hand wavered and drooped hopelessly.

Noiselessly, Dupres appeared at his back. The Cajan halted a second, frowning in wonderment at the strange garb of the skulker. His derby hat was now a sagging, pulpy thing. His blue serge suit, his collar and tie, and his shoes that once had been brown-and-white but now appeared to be mere blobs of red clay. A city man—or boy. What could be his mission here in the heart of the woods, fifty miles from Mobile?

Something warned the little fellow. With a gasp he whirled, attempting to fling up the automatic.

"*Blatte!*" gritted Emile, and closed with him.

One stride, two motions of the

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giant's arms, and the lurker was disarmed and helpless. True, the pistol thudded once. Its heavy forty-five-caliber slug tore three or four pink bells of laurel from a bush but did no further damage.

Joe Carney tried to fight, but he might as well have tried to stop the drenching sub-tropical rain. Emile Dupres thrust the automatic into the deep hip pocket of his overalls, seized both of the little man's wrists in his left hand, then thrust him a yard away and stared at him.

That last wrench, which nearly tore Joe Carney's arms from their sockets, was the last straw in his weakened condition. He sagged, breathed deeply, and fell in a black faint.

The Cajan let go of him then, turning him face upward with the toe of his laced boot. For a moment it seemed as if he meant to crush Carney under his heel the way he would have crushed a cottonmouth moccasin that disputed his way across a cypress log.

But the undiluted wretchedness of the haggard, upturned face, the face from which both freckles and innate pugnacity had faded and in which homely red bristles had grown, halted the Cajan. His harsh visage did not exactly soften—it could not do that—but a scowl of puzzlement replaced the flinty, righteous anger.

Emile knew city men—even some of the liquor racketeers of Mobile. But never before had he seen a northern gunman. Here was one, come straight down the Dixie Highway—JH—and then that sand-and-clay track through the wilderness which is pompously termed the Mississippi Valley Highway.

The police of Jackson, on a bluff above the flooded Tombigbee River, had found the hot car where Carney had abandoned it. All the ferries had been drowned out. Carney had managed to get a Negro to row him across the turbulent three-mile-wide stream. He had come the rest of these miles toward the Gulf of Mexico on foot. But all the gunman's gloss was now gone from him and his clothes. He was starved, terrified and sick. Unafraid of pursuit, he feared this awesome country—and the unending rain.

JOE CARNEY awoke snug and warm. Hot, in fact, for dengue fever had got deep into the marrow of his bones. Everything about him looked unreal. A rough-raftered cabin of two rooms. A giant blue-gray dog, always silent except for resounding thumps when he lay down on the floor before the hearth. A big, harsh-faced man with long black hair like an Indian—a man who dosed him with quinine, and with a stinking greenish brew which pepper-burned his throat and gullet, but which felt powerful and comfortable once it reached his stomach. That dose and the quinine made him sweat.

Strips of tasty meat, broiled and cut up fine, were fed to him by the giant. This was yearling venison, though Joe Carney did not guess. He also tasted fresh milk still warm from the cow—and it made the little gunman snarl and spit. There were satsuma oranges, skinned and seeded, which he liked, and lemonade squeezed from a giant lemon the size of an osage melon and mildly spiked with corn liquor from a charred keg.

Emile Dupres fed his patient regularly, but left him alone through long hours, morning and afternoon. The big, silent mastiff stayed in the cabin when his master was away, but he could not be petted or cajoled. He lay about,

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occasionally stretching wide his terrifying jaws in a yawn, completely indifferent to the sick man on the cot.

A day came, nearly two weeks after he had been carried to the cabin, when Joe Carney got up on shaky legs and lifted down his clothes from pegs on the wall. Only then did the dog awake to any signs of interest. He did not interfere with Joe's dressing. Even after Joe was fully clothed, the dog merely followed him out into the bare red-clay dooryard. But when Joe went shakily to the gate that gave upon the wood road, he found his left forearm seized firmly in the mastiff's jaws. The dog refused to *let* him lam!

As soon as Joe, trembling with weakness, went back to the cot, the dog left him and lay down in a corner, indifferent again. Joe Carney cursed wonderingly. He had never seen an animal like this—no, not even in Lincoln Park, where they had the zoo.

THAT night, Emile Dupres did not come in until well after dark. When he did appear he staggered a little. Saying nothing to the convalescent, he stripped off his chambray shirt, letting his overalls hang to his waist. As soon as he lighted the lamp, the left side of his big torso, above his hips, showed drenched and sticky with blood. One buckshot had torn through his arm; another had plowed along his ribs, tearing up a sliver of flesh and skin as long as a man's forefinger.

Death had whispered as it passed him by.

Hot water. Then a swabbing with iodine, which bit until the Cajan's teeth ground together. Then gauze compresses, sprinkled with boric acid and held down by strips of plaster.

The Cajan asked no help, paid no attention to Joe's awed curses and questions. Only when a clean shirt had been donned did the big man come over to the cot. Never before had he spoken more than curt monosyllables to Joe Carney.

"Who paid you to come and kill me?" he demanded abruptly.

"Wha-at?" gasped Carney. "You think I done—*that?* After you took care of me? Sa-ay, big fella, what the hell kinda guy d'ya think I am?"

"*Une blatte!*" growled Emile. The patient would miss the exquisite contempt in that word, since he neither knew the French for cockroach, nor suspected that in that language the vermin was feminine, and implied the effeminate. "You would have shot me from ambush, that first day!"

"Oh, yeh, mebbe I would," agreed Joe Carney with a shrug. "I was sick and kinda nuts then. I dunno what in hell I thought I c'd get offa you. I was broke, and hungry—"

He fell silent as he saw his host go over and lift the long shotgun from its nails on the wall, break the breech, and squint through the barrels. Anyhow, there couldn't be any burnt powder in *that* gun! It had hung there all day long.

"Your dog wouldn't let me outa the yard anyhow," Joe continued after a pause. "I was gonna beat it, an' I tried."

"Where?"

Joe stared. "Hell, I dunno," he admitted. "Somewheres—and try and get a job, I s'pose. The booze racket's done for, now we got beer."

Alabama had not availed itself of the new dispensation, so the Cajan did not understand.

"You want to work?" he asked doubtfully. "All right. You can work with me. My *frère,* Antoine, he

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was killed in March. It is too hard for one man."

"Oh, yeah?" breathed Joe, staring up. "You mean your buddy was shot, and now they're layin' for you? Good clean fun in your job, eh? You begin to interest me to beat hell!—Say, just what is it you do? I thought you was a farmer!"

"No, citrus gas," said Emile. "And I guard the dipping vats. Four of us, we take turns. That's where they shot Antoine—and me. I got one through the head. With a rifle."

The little man's eyes were wide at the unadorned savagery of this nonchalant tale. And they boggled out still further when it came to light that the gas used in the big citrus orchards of the neighborhood was precisely the same poison gas introduced by the Germans into modern war. Chlorine—the heavy green cloud which sent men coughing and retching into oblivion!

"Good grief! Poison gas and buckshot! Well, you can lead me to it, big fella. It'll be sorta in my line, after Cicero and Burnham—sorta." He grinned. "Do we wear masks and everything?"

DAYS went by, however, before Joe Carney could make the grade. Now big Emile talked. He did not boast, but he made plain his odd position, here in the new citrus belt of the piney woods.

There were six good-sized orchards, all fenced with hog-tight wire. Outside the wire ranged cattle and swine; the fierce, wild, stringy beeves and the gaunt, savage razorback hogs belonging to whites, blacks and Cajans. There were a few herds of sheep, too. Any man who wanted to raise oranges, pecans or market truck had to fence in his place and keep out the free-range animals. That was the Alabama "herd law."

Resentment over the fences ran high. Now and then a whole length of fence would be found cut down, with animals inside, ruining the fruit. There was no recourse against the vandals.

"Gotta catch 'em cutting the wire, and shoot 'em, eh?" nodded Joe with thrilled understanding.

"That is so—only very hard. The worst trouble, though, comes with the dipping vats," said Emile.

He explained that according to State law, all cattle had to be dipped regularly. The State had established a station here, and all farmers were required to round up their cattle and bring them here for dipping. That cost money, and if given half a chance, the sullen, angry ones who never could understand the reason behind such a law dynamited the dipping vats.

Emile and his brother had made big money—for the woods, that is—by taking over a number of dangerous part-time jobs. They had maintained the vats, twice repairing them when they had been destroyed, meanwhile guarding them as well as possible. They patrolled the woods, discouraging wire-cutters and repairing breaks in the orchard fences. Once each season they gassed all the citrus shrubs, thereby killing parasites.

A careless man might easily lose his life or his health while handling chlorine gas. But Emile and his brother, who had fought three years for France, were experts. They wore masks, and they did not neglect a single precaution for their own safety. But now Antoine was dead, and Emile had had great difficulty finding a helper who was not afraid to use the gas.

For the work of fence and dipping-vat patrol, there were three other

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Cajans who would slouch around with shotguns. Their actual bravery was questionable, but for the sake of the good pay they went through the motions. Emile checked up on them sharply.

"I wait for those who came with dynamite and killed my brother," he said simply. "They will come back."

"Do you know 'em? I should think mebbe you'd go after 'em your own-self," said Joe Carney.

"They are not from this part of the woods," said Emile. "I think they go all around in several counties, and I think they are paid to dynamite the vats. I will know two of them when I see them."

THE little Irishman, had he thought about it, would have grinned and called himself as completely unprincipled as he was lacking in any vestige of nervousness or fear. On the causeway over Lake Calumet, just south of Chicago, he had left two hijackers the victims of his smoking pistol. The big boss had handed him a wad of notes and told him curtly to lam. Otherwise he never would have thought of coming south. Flight in a stolen car, though, with a final lap on foot through this rain-wet wilderness had given him his first taste of fear.

Now, watching and listening to big Emile, and later watching the careful competence of this man who lived with death all of his waking hours, Joe Carney learned a thrill of admiration for something besides lawless toughness. This big fella was good, and he had been a real pal in time of need. Certain resolutions were still misty in the little gunman's mind. Perhaps he would never phrase them. But once he learned that Emile had a dangerous job on hand, and could use "a guy with nerve," Joe never for an instant considered going on south to Mobile to catch a fruit boat.

The job of gassing was simple enough, if a man took the proper care. The gas came in long cylinders, and was under pressure. The cylinders were stacked at the dipping vats, like greenish-brown cigars against the outside wall of the supply shed. When one of them was needed it was taken in a wheelbarrow or a wagon.

The orchards here had Florida oranges, satsumas, grapefruit, lemons, cumquats and loquats. All were grafted shrubs, the bases being the hardy, tough and thorny trifoliata, which never grows much higher than a man's head. When each was to be gassed, a canvas hood was dropped over it, and a metal flex hose with a nozzle carried the chlorine up under the hood.

There was a short hiss of gas, then a ten-second wait. Then the hood was lifted away and the men went on to the next shrub, upwind. If you left the hood on too long, the gas destroyed the shrubs as well as the parasites.

Masks were essential, of course, and these made the job hard in hot weather. The very first day he was out in the orchard with Emile, however, Joe Carney saw something he never forgot. The day was humid, windless. The greenish gas dissipated slowly, clinging to the ground. As they neared the end of the first row, Joe was taking surreptitious breaths by lifting his mask.

ALL of a sudden he stopped doing that. A big, mousy jackrabbit hopped across between the rows. One three-legged leap took him through the center of that hanging greenish curtain. A second and more spasmodic

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leap took him out of danger. But the damage was done. He fell, twitching. In fifteen seconds he lay still.

His mask firmly in place and his cheeks paper-white, Joe Carney went on, wheeling the barrow, then releasing gas from the clip nozzle as soon as Emile had the canvas hood in place. Conversation, of course, was impossible.

Traces of the dengue fever would linger with Carney for weeks more, bringing occasional hours of listlessness, bone ache and ague. But the odorous, peppery brew which Emile gave him twice daily seemed to be a specific for the illness. Little by little, as they finished the gassing of this orchard and moved on to the next, Joe found himself able to work larger fractions of each day, and to sleep nine hours of dreamless exhaustion each night.

Emile had furnished him with two overall suits, with chambray shirts and a pair of laced boots—too large, but usable. He had kept Joe Carney with him at the cabin, as a matter of course. The little man, to do him justice, had not thought of the money he might be earning. Here was a safe haven, in case the hounds of the law really were interested in him, though he rather doubted they would trouble about him, once they were sure he had left Chicago.

But Emile was generous. When he was paid off for the finished orchard, he handed over a ten-, a five- and a one-dollar bill to the little man.

"Two dollars a day for half time," he explained. "Now you work more, you get more. And the time for dipping comes soon. There will be trouble then. You get paid five a day for act' as guard."

"You mean—I *earned* this?" asked Joe, his voice oddly shaky, a queer look in his blue eyes. He had forgotten all about the perils and discomforts of working in a gas mask. Somehow, this slender sheaf of small bills—about one-third of what he had been paid for guarding a load of alky from Indiana Harbor to the Loop—looked like important money to him.

The Cajan nodded. "I think pretty soon now those men will come," he said. "I will sleep at the supply shed, near the vats. Most times, the job of guard is easy. Now for a month we earn the money."

DURING the days that intervened before Saturday, when even Emile went into Citronelle—the only town of the region—to meet his fellows and perhaps indulge in a movie, Joe crinkled his brow in unaccustomed thought. In the lining of the jacket of his old blue serge suit there was a crudely sewed place. He ripped this out and removed a single twenty-dollar bill. He put this thoughtfully with the sixteen dollars he had earned.

On Saturday evening, he too went in town, catching the down train at Laurel Siding. The three Cajans who helped Emile guard the fences and vats were left in charge.

In Citronelle, Joe Carney made two purchases. The first was a glittering wrist watch with a chromium flex band. It was a good watch for an outdoor man who worked with his hands, for it had no face or crystal. The figures of the hours and minutes showed in recessed slots.

"I saw you didn't have any ticker, so—so—I wish you'd wear this!" said Joe diffidently, next morning. He started to blush, to shake as though the dengue had hold of him again.

As he fixed the shiny bauble around

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his brown wrist, Emile looked down at it a full minute. Then he raised his harsh face.

"Thanks," he said. "I am glad to have it."

Joe, vastly pleased with himself, went away to open and use his other purchase. This was a package containing a safety razor, a shaving brush and soap. As he scraped and grinned at his image in the cracked mirror, he noted that the multitude of brown freckles had come back.

THE day which had been assigned by the authorities as the deadline for cattle dipping in this region drew near. If there were vats in readiness, and if the herd owners did not avail themselves of the facilities, then the State would step in, round up and dip the animals—and charge five dollars a head, a ruinous price.

So far, not a single cow had been brought from the piney woods range. That was ominous.

Emile stopped the younger man midway in the last orchard and put him on as an additional guard for the vats. Two of the other three Cajans had quit; possibly they had been intimidated.

"I will finish this gassing," said Emile. "At evening I will come and relieve you. Take the shotgun."

"I'd rather have my old rod," grinned Joe boyishly.

With alacrity he returned to fetch the automatic, and thenceforth he prowled the woods about the supply shack and the vats.

But no skulkers appeared in daylight. All Joe discovered was one minor fence repair, and a trio of belligerent razorbacks chewing the young cumquats.

The two businesslike dynamiters came by night, and in the rain. They drove mules and a spring wagon loaded with cases of giant powder. Wires, caps and a plunger dynamo were wrapped in a waterproof poncho.

They knew the lay of the land, and exactly what they would find. This was a matter of revenge as well as destruction. On their previous attempt they had failed and one of their number had been left on the ground with a rifle bullet through his head. The Cajans had said that the killer, Emile Dupres, now slept in the supply shack, within five yards of the two long vats. Very well. He might never awaken from that sleep!

Tethering the team of mules on an old wood road, they carried the cases of giant up to within thirty yards of the shack and the vats. Vivid lightning gave them occasional glimpses of their objective.

When all was set for the operation, they carried the cases down and set them in the bottom of the two vats, in such wise that the explosion would blow them into one big, shapeless crater. Then, speedily, they set two more cases against the side of the supply shack, where the cigar-like chlorine cylinders were piled. Wires came from here also. A single downward stroke of the dynamo plunger would send sparks to detonate six cases of giant.

THREE hundred yards away in the cabin, Joe Carney paced uneasily back and forth. He flinched each time the unearthly glare of lightning came to yellow the light of his kerosene lamp. He dreaded lightning, and never in his life had felt so vastly alone. Usually, in a thunderstorm, he had been able to mingle with men he knew, and to hide his perturbation.

He suddenly resolved to go to Emile

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for company. Sitting down, he pulled on his boots, and laced them. Then he reached for Emile's yellow slicker, left hanging on the door. Putting this on, he bent his head and went forth into the rain.

He turned back momentarily, took his automatic, and thrust it in a pocket. Then he squished out through the puddles and into the scrub.

Half way to his destination he stopped short. Dull-clanking, but unmistakable, there came the sound of shaken cowbells! This was Emile's alarm. Someone had run into the waist-high catfish-line which the Cajan had strung about the vats to make a skulker give notice of his coming. Joe did not know it, of course, but one of the dynamiters, returning to crouch over the dynamo plunger had forgotten the alarm, though he and his confederate had been careful about it when they came.

No matter, thought the man at the plunger; all was ready!

"Let 'er go, George!"

GRRROOOUUUMMM!

That terrible flash of red, outblazing the lightning, followed by a thunder blast more deafening than the wrath of the heavens, wrung a frenzied curse from Joe Carney. The dynamiters had succeeded!

Probably they had bumped the big fella!

Pistol in hand, Joe burst through the scrub. But just before he reached the scene of demolition, something big and shadowy blocked his way. A team of mules and a wagon!

A flash of lightning. Two men in dark raincoats—one of them with a gun! That man yelled a sudden warning, and flung up the shotgun. A blaze of two barrels belching fire and lead.

Joe had dropped to a crouch. His upper lip came back in a snarl from his teeth.

The automatic in his hand jumped once—twice—thrice.

Joe had no hat now. Something had whisked it from his head, though his scalp was untouched. Out in front, two shapeless huddles lay on the ground. As he broke into a run for the supply shack, Joe flung two more bullets in their general direction. If they just hadn't got the big fella!

A deep pit yawning where the vats had been! He stopped suddenly, and his boots slipped on the lathery clay. As he scrambled up, a lightning flash showed him something which brought a groan of horror.

The shack was leveled! Hanging there in the air, slowly settling, to mushroom and creep over the débris and the ground, was a thirty-foot-high curtain of the deadly green gas—chlorine! If big Emile was somewhere in the débris of that shack the gas would soon cover him!

"They blowed up all the cylinders too!" yelled Joe in anguish.

He circled around the crater, to get to the back of the wrecked shack. This was mostly small pine logs, now flung about like spilled matches; but in the lime-shimmer of forkèd lightning the little man saw a half of the pitched roof lying in one piece. And under that piece of roof something was caught, for projecting was a human arm and hand!

WITH a choked cry, Joe leaped, bent, and tugged with all his convalescent strength. The roof refused to budge.

Grunting, cursing, he reached down to the ground for another hold; and in the darkness something stung his skinned knuckles. The chlorine had

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come! A green cloud of it—green for danger!

Joe shrieked in terror for his friend. Yanking off his slicker, he beat at that remorseless green wall which was slowly coming, an inch at a time, but growing in height from the ground as the gas above descended and mushroomed.

For a moment, his tactics were fairly effective, though Joe himself got a small whiff of the choking poison, and nearly collapsed. Head reeling, throat seared, he groped for something he could use as a lever—a small log, or—

From beneath the fallen roof came a gasping cry. "Get—gas mask! *Gas!*"

It was Emile Dupres, and he was still alive!

Lightning flared. Joe had to let go of the log he had found and like a demon fight with the slicker against the encroaching gas. Some of it clung to the slicker and came back to bite into his face and blind his eyes with tears. This would be the last chance. Whimpering, almost praying, he grabbed the log, slid it under and heaved. Once—again!

The broken roof, defeated, raised up and fell back. Joe groped down through the gas, grabbed a weakly moving figure, and dragged as frantically as his slight strength would permit.

Five minutes later, Henry McLean, the planter for whom they were working, hurriedly dressed after the explosion, found them eighty feet from the scene of the explosion. The little man was gassed, unconscious. Emile Dupres, with four crushed ribs and a broken arm, was trying to bring him to consciousness.

McLean and two of his men took charge and in a short time both men were laid on cots fixed in the tonneau of McLean's seven-passenger phaëton, and were being driven slowly and carefully toward St. Catherine's Infirmary in Mobile. Joe Carney moaned once or twice, but he did not awaken; and during all that long ride south, a big, gray-haired Cajan held the little gunman's slender wrist in a firm, anxious clasp.

JOE CARNEY had lost his voice. But when they let big Emile in to see him, the little man grinned and whispered happily:

"Hyah, old-timer! I ain't going to cash in, after all. And I'm glad to see you, pardner!—Will your arm be all right pretty soon?"

"Yes, pretty soon," said Emile, sitting down, a peculiar scowl on his forbidding face.

Even the doctors were not quite sure yet that Joe would recover, though they now thought his chances better than at first.

"Well, make it snappy!" bade the little man. "You and me can lick the world! We're going to save up some jack, pardner. Then we're going to have some oranges of our own to gas!"

Unknowingly—for the social ban against Cajans thereabouts never had been explained to Joe Carney—this came right to the heart of a secret ambition long cherished by Emile Dupres. To put the money he had saved into a fruit orchard of his own! That, of course, had long been impossible for him, a Cajan.

But with a white partner? Yes, that would do the trick!

"You and I will have the finest orchard in Alabama!" Emile said shakily, leaning forward to take Joe Carney's hand. "I have enough money, and you have enough spirit—partner!"

THE END.

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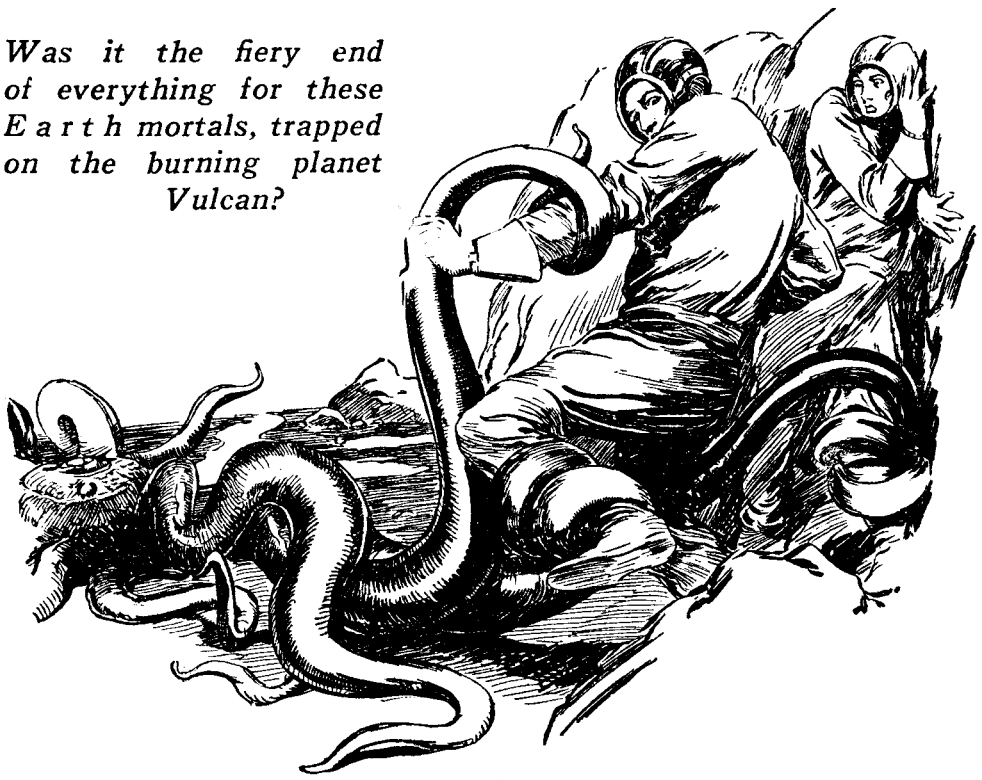
The Fire Planet

By RAY CUMMINGS

Author of "Banknote Brigands," "Rats of the Harbor," etc.

Was it the fiery end of everything for these Earth mortals, trapped on the burning planet Vulcan?



The monster was like a living rope

THE CHARACTERS.

DOROTHY DASHCOURT, daughter of Sir Robert Dashcourt, a British scientist who, in the year 2082 A.D., has discovered a way to conquer fire. Father and daughter planned an expedition to the burning planet Vulcan, in quest of the life-giving metal called *zelium*. They outfitted a space-ship called the Starglow and set out; but as the Starglow was about to land on Vulcan, her crew mutinied and took over the ship, after having murdered Sir Robert.

TIMOTHY, Dot's cousin, discovered as a stowaway after the Starglow had landed on the fire planet. Most of the ship's passengers had gone out in search of *zelium*, which they had found. But while they were bringing the large chunks of metal back to the ship, they were attacked by strange little gray savages and taken captive. At the same time, Dot and Tim, who had gone out in search of the first party, were also captured by another group of the savages.

DR. LEE CRAIG, a brilliant young medical man who had always been fully trusted by Sir Robert. It was Lee who had originally discovered the precious *zelium* and given his discovery to the world. He is now Dot's strongest ally.

CAPTAIN FRANK BLAKE, famous stratosphere flyer who had been engaged by Sir Robert as the pilot of the Starglow. He, too, is wholly loyal to Dot.

ROLF THOMAS, the mechanical chief, and now leading the mutineers.

This story began in the Argosy for September 23.

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MELENDEZ, a mechanic, and the man who had actually murdered Sir Robert. Hot-headed and dangerous.

FOLEY, another mechanic, like Melendez, taking orders from Thomas. (A third assistant named Jackson, who had for years been Sir Robert's laboratory assistant, was killed during one of the fights.)

SING, the Chinese cook, long Sir Robert's devoted body servant. His loyalty is as unquestioned as had been that of Dot's faithful little dog, Bandy, which the mutineers had killed.

CHAPTER XI *(Continued).*

THE LIVING ROPE.

"THINK we're heading right, Dot?"

"Yes, I—I think so."

Dot was breathless, panting. They had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile. Fantastic uplands! Fused and pitted rocks, now burned as though all this were only slag. Ashes strewn everywhere. Once, Dot had stumbled; and beyond all Tim's efforts to save her, had slid and fallen a dozen feet into a gully where only the piled ashes had saved her from serious injury. Yawning cracks to leap over—gashes as though an earthquake had ripped and torn at this shaken, desolate waste.

There had been no alarm. The moving shadows and blobs of the savages on the Starglow's deck had been visible by the dome-light. A group of the little savages was clustered by the landing ladder; others were down there on the ramp. The Starglow had faded into the distance now, with only the beacon-light at the dome-peak showing.

"How far is the fire-valley, Dot?"

"I don't know. Not far."

"They ought to be coming back by now."

Nothing showed on the rocks ahead in the darkness. Had the returning *zelium* party gotten past? Dot scrambled alongside of Tim, breathless, bruised by the constant falls and because of the sweltering hot, confining Vulco-suit. She and Tim had not adjusted their helmets or face vizors; yet it seemed impossible to breathe in this suffocating air.

The smell of burned gases was everywhere. Drifting ashes parched and choked nose and throat. Hot, eerie silence. The sky was lurid with red and yellow, and little distant spots of flame were occasionally visible for a moment, and then vanished.

The dome-beacon of the Starglow was presently blotted out. The sky to the south showed the threatening storm; and the rumbling of the fire-valley and its glare were ahead of them.

At this moment, though Dot and Tim could not know it, the returning *zelium* party must have been passing somewhere near here. But neither party was aware of the other.

"Tim—I—I guess I'll have to rest a minute."

"Sure. Sure enough, Dot."

They had seemed to be descending steadily, and now they found themselves in the narrow tangles of a gully. Ten-foot jagged walls enclosed them—a gully some thirty feet wide, descending a twisting path as though once it might have been the bed of a mountain watercourse. Water? Nothing could have been more incongruous in this burned and slag-strewn wilderness. Perhaps at one time a stream of molten lava had eaten its way along here with swift, fiery erosion.

Dot was huddled beside Tim, panting, gazing at the dim and fearful outlines of the rocks. Tim sat peering, his weapon on his knee. They were so

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utterly alone in this strange world—this glowing, lurid-tinted darkness, fantastic beyond the reason of all earthly humans. Would they ever get back to Earth? What a contrast to this tortured landscape of Vulcan!

DOT felt Tim start. His hand pressed into her side, and his voice hissed in her ear:

"Dot! Look at it—that—that thing moving!"

They leaped to their feet, stood gripping each other—terrified now for an instant beyond speech or movement. How had this thing come slithering so silently upon them? But it was here—monstrously horrible, the sight of it striking them with so great a terror that their senses were numbed. A length of it quivered in the gully ahead of them.

It was like a gray-brown python, undulating with movement. The loops of its two-foot thick body stretched back among the rocks that were strewn on the gully floor. A headless thing, its raised end was pointed, and tipped with a single glowing eye on a stalk—an eye a foot, perhaps, in diameter. The eye glowed green-red—baleful.

The monster was hardly more than twenty feet away. Tim stiffened, then his weapon came up. A heat-bolt at this thing—

But it might leap; might reach them in a second as the bolt struck it.

Dot seized Tim's arm. "No! Run!—Run back!"

They turned upon a new horror. A similar monster lay quivering in the gully behind them. But this one had no eye; it was only a forked tail, lashing. They could see the thick body stretching back ten or fifteen feet into the darkness. It seemed to be a branching python, for it divided, with one length looped upward to the left, over the gully top, and the other to the right.

In that frozen instant full realization came upon them. There were not two monsters! It was all one—a dragon with branching segments sprawled here over all the rocks, like a tangled rope! A monstrous, bodiless octopus, all tentacles. Some of it showed on both sides of the gully-top. It had surrounded its two victims; the loops of its python-segments were closing in!

A soundless thing, there was only a faint scratching as it slipped and slid on the rocks. A loop of it sagged down from the gully-top, almost abreast of the stricken Tim and Dot, and a little clatter of falling stones came with it.

Tim found his voice. "Got to—kill it! It's—all around us!"

"The eye!" Dot gasped. "Aim at the eye!"

They whirled to face that glowing eye. A round spot in the darkness, like the draft opening in a flaming furnace. It was reared high now, advancing. All the segments of the thing were slithering along into the gully. It was like a knotted, tangled skein of living rope!

TIM fired. The bolt, with its electronic flash, hissed into the darkness. But the eye remained poised. It glowed with a new intensity, and the stalk upon which it protruded was glowing.

Another shot. Tim held the bolt for its full duration of several seconds. He and Dot were aware that the side-loops of the monster were sagging and lashing at them. A gray-brown, sinuous body; not sleek and smooth, but pitted, scarred—fused as though it were slag, burned by heat. And the heat-bolts did not kill it! The whole

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gully was alive with the tangles of the creature's writhing body; living rope struggling to enmesh its victims.

Suddenly Tim and Dot were looped by its quivering strands and were wildly fighting, flailing with arms and legs. A chaos of horror. Dot felt a coil of the rope flung around her, but she broke through it, wrenched it apart, somehow. The two-foot strands broke with a gruesome squirting of noisome liquid, and her senses reeled. Above Tim's shouts she could hear the thrumming of the thing's low voice.

Tim shoved her, and she found that they had been pushed up again the gully's side-wall.

"Dot! Climb out! Up!" he cried.

But the wall was too steep. He lifted her, but she tumbled back. Another great strand wound around them now. It was very light—strangely imponderable. They wrenched it apart; and for a few feet of its length it seemed to deflate like a balloon bursting, seemed to lose its form and substance.

"Can't do it, Tim!—Too steep here!" she panted. For there were no hand-holds up this precipitous ten-foot rocky wall.

Then, in a moment, she and Tim gained a little ledge a few feet up.

The tangled python had gathered its unbroken strands into a solid bunch across the gully, and its eye glowed in the center of the tangle. A glaring eye, gauging with dim instinct for battle this enemy which had so strangely eluded it.

Again Tim held his bolt on the waving eye. What strange phenomenon was this? Under the heat of the beam the lashing, undulating rope-strands of the monster were glowing red. Like thin glass easily heated to luminosity. The rocks were heating, too! The gully floor was glowing, and the opposite wall was turning faintly red. A luminous glow, spreading . . .

Weird fire planet! What strange conditions of nature were here! These igneous rocks had so low a fusing point that under the heat-beam of Tim's weapon they were melting and fusing!

The heat was spreading, rising of its own momentum!

Tim snapped off his bolt. All in an instant the monster had seemed to shrivel. The tangle of its strands glowed red, then white-hot; incredibly, they shrank in size until the thing was a little snarled mass of luminous wire, with the eye poised above it. Then the eye melted, sank slowly down, was gone. The writhing wire dwindled and fused into a knot—dissolved into smoke—vanished into nothingness.

SMOKE was swirling everywhere. The red-yellow of the rocks was turning blue. A luminous blue flame was flickering and darting along the boulders so swiftly that it could have been a powder-train igniting.

Tim and Dot were gasping, coughing. The smoke had the choking reek of sulphur. The little, licking tongues of flame looked like sulphur, though not slow-burning, for here combustion was as swift as that of celluloid.

Across the gully the whole wall melted down a sagging avalanche of molten blue lava. Released gases swirling upward, burst suddenly into a great jet of red-yellow flame, burned for an instant, and flickered away, smothered by the smoke. So sudden a conflagration was here that in half a minute, as the gruesome monster fused and vanished, the stricken Tim and Dot were engulfed in fire.

"The helmet!" he gasped. "Drop—drop your vizor!"

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She pulled her helmet over her head and face barely in time, as a jet of flame enveloped them with actual contact. She felt Tim shoving her down from the burning ledge, and together they slid and fell. It seemed a fire-pit here now—a furnace interior. Beneath their feet was soft, sticky ground that yielded to their tread.

No air had come to Dot, and she felt that she could hold her breath no longer. Then, abruptly, her respirators were working. Blessed air!

She heard Tim's shouting voice, muffled by his helmet.

"This way, Dot!—This way!"

She felt him wildly shoving at her. The fire was all around them now. These crumbling, tumbling walls! For the gully was caving, changing all its form. She was aware that they were running, staggering along over a flaming ooze, a viscous, fiery morass.

They burst wildly through a solid sheet of flame. Darkness seemed ahead; the glare was now behind them. Why, this was safety. Not death, but life again. She felt Tim yanking her up an incline. They climbed a wall which seemed to be crumbling; then they were running into the blessed darkness, where the ground was firm.

She raised her vizor, tossed back her helmet, and saw Tim's grim face. He was trying to smile.

"We're—all right now, Dot."

The broken, crag-strewn uplands were again around them. Which way to run now? Which way the flaming valley where they would find Lee and Frank? Which way the Starglow? And as they stood there, this rock-strewn darkness was suddenly bristling with moving shapes. Upright things, with round white tops. The white-haired savages!

Dot and Tim stood confused and helpless as a score of the little people came with a rush and overwhelmed them.

CHAPTER XII.

DRUMBEATS OF TERROR.

"GOT it, Foley? Easy—don't stumble. Accursed thing's heavy."

"Sure, I can handle it. Shove them damned men out of me way.—Back, you! Give us room! Oh, Dr. Craig, if ever we get out of this—"

The little savages pressed around them in a throng, hurrying forward over the dark, tumbled wasteland. Foley carried the heavy battery box now, bearing it in his great arms as though it were a child. He stumbled over the broken ground, and Lee kept close to him, helping him pick his way. The little gray men were jammed about them; but though they scattered, startled at Foley's roaring voice and flailing gestures, they at once pressed back. Ten feet away, in the center of the savages, Frank, Thomas and Melendez were grouped, carrying the projector between them.

It seemed to Lee that there were fully two hundred savages now, for the party had been augmented by other groups that had risen up from their hiding places among the rocks. All were silent now, urging their captives forward.

"Dr. Craig, where are they after takin' us? Not to that fire valley—"

"How should I know, Foley.—no, not that way—"

"Yer think we might get a chance to use the projector on 'em if we could—"

"Maybe."

Mingled with the turmoil of his thoughts—a dull despair, mixed with

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horror at what must have happened to Dot—irony swept Lee. In the midst of life's tragedy, farce presses always so close with its grinning face! This hulking giant, Foley, who for hours past had growled with a thinly-veiled, murderous menace at Lee, was very humble now! His helmet and face-vizor dangled back off his head, and he appeared pale and grim—frightened and anxious to do anything Lee said. The heavy-browed scowl of the murderous Melendez was gone now; his swart face was ashen, and a panic of chattering fear was on him. Thomas, too, was very grim, looking now to Frank and Lee for leadership.

The situation reminded Lee of the old-time phrase, "The devil was sick; the devil a monk would be."

FRANK was suddenly shouting, "Lee! Look off there! A fire-storm coming sure!"

A fire-storm! The glare of the flaming valley was visible off to the left. Ahead, to the southward, the sky was now lurid with a phantasy of gathering cloud-masses which rose above the dark curve of the rocky horizon. Whirling, funnel-shaped clouds, they were, painted with fiery colors.

Lee's heart leaped with an abrupt realization. The glare on the clouds was not altogether a reflection from the distant ground, off there below the horizon; it seemed that the flames were inherent in the clouds themselves. Flames in the sky! As he gazed, Lee saw a great tongue of flame lick out from a black cloud bank. A giant stab of fire, it leaped downward like a lightning bolt, striking beneath the horizon somewhere. A gas cloud up there in the sky, heating gradually until all at once the ignition point had been reached and it burst into flame!

Another whirling funnel turned suddenly into a giant fire-ball, a silent puff of yellow-crimson light. For an instant it painted the whole rocky landscape here with the glare of its conflagration. And presently there came the whirring roar of the thunder—the sound of a giant, sucking blast of air.

What fantastic rage of nature was this? What impending cataclysm was to strike here soon? The thought laid a chill upon Lee; it seemed frightening beyond all human reason.

The savages, too, were frightened. A yell of terror went up at the distant heavenly pyrotechnics. Then the party, suddenly checked as though the sky-glare had hit them, plunged forward again with renewed haste.

Lee was aware of other spots of fire, here in the confused darkness. To one side he momentarily saw a distant blue-yellow radiance. It was—though he could not know it then—the gully pit in which Tim and Dot a short time previously had so nearly been engulfed. But it was visible to Lee only for a moment.

There were still other moving spots of flame, always distant. It seemed to Lee that at times this creeping fire on the rocks was following the savages. But if so, they did not heed it.

Again Lee's attention went to the oncoming fire-storm. It was obviously sweeping northward, how fast he could not guess. Nor how far away it might be. Still a hundred miles, perhaps. There seemed to be a southern wind springing up, for a hot blast of air fanned his wet face.

Where were the savages going, heading into the storm across this tumbled desolation of rocks? Were they taking refuge somewhere? From whence had they come? A race of humans—or perhaps only a small tribe

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of primitive nomads—living here at the pole as a last retreat from the fiery regions of the south; hiding here, and eking out a most miserable existence. Now they were being assailed by the marauding fire-storms.

AHEAD on the rocks a cavern entrance suddenly yawned. The savages plunged into it. Underground! So they lived underground, in refuge from the heat and flames! Lee recalled now that it had seemed that portions of these fused, burned uplands were honeycombed with caverns. All in a moment the party, with their stumbling captives, were plunging downward in what seemed to be a narrow, descending tunnel. It was wholly dark at first; the lurid sky was gone, and though the air felt a little cooler here, it was even more horribly oppressive. Hands guided Lee. Quite evidently these men with their goggling eyes could see better in the dark than the Earth men.

Then tiny spits of light sprang up; little burning beacons along the tunnel-sides. What they were Lee could not determine. Some burning fluid? Or torches of some burning vegetation, like wood?

The tunnel descended sharply. It turned and twisted, branching into tube-like corridors. A honeycomb indeed. There were cave-openings, one of which had a great rift in its broken roof of slag. Through the rift came a shaft of the sky-glare, and a palpably hot blast of the overhead storm-wind.

A hundred feet underground—two hundred. It seemed not more. But they traveled laterally for a considerable distance; and as he was hurried along, engulfed by the pressing forms of his savage captors, Lee was flooded by chaotic impressions. He had glimpses of things strange, fantastic. This was a little city, buried here. In the honeycombed walls and the tiny caves humans were living. Side-holes in the corridor walls, natural, perhaps, or crudely hollowed out by human hands, served as habitations. Little cubbies. Cells in a honeycomb.

Savages were living here, and the incoming party, shouting out the news—perhaps some word of the giant brown living things they had captured, and undoubtedly news of the threat of the oncoming fire-storm—filled the corridors and caves with their tumult. Other savages came rushing from their dark little holes, and followed behind the arriving mob.

Brief glimpses were all that Lee could get. A side cave showed a ledge-like balcony, with crude stone steps fashioned in the pitted metal wall. Behind the ledge was a long row of hollowed caves, with narrow open fronts draped with rags. Meaningless word! The rags in no way resembled woven fabric. Rather, tattered gray animal skins or the flimsy shells of insects.

Little gray people were on the balcony-ledge. A torch light showed them briefly to Lee as he swept past. Women were up there, too; gray savage women garbed like the men and with the same white upstanding hair. There were naked little children, too, clutching at their mothers' knees and frightened by the turmoil. And some of the women held infants at their breasts.

Other glimpses. There was a dark, subterranean chamber where it seemed that a gray, ashy soil had sifted into a stretch which was under cultivation. Crude implements of agriculture stood about, neglected now. Things growing in this gray ash? With only a momentary glimpse as he passed, Lee

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thought he had seen a fantasy of tangled, fungous vegetation. And there was another glimpse, a moment later, of what seemed to be torch light shining on water. Perhaps not water as chemically known on Earth, but at least some form of liquid. From it a white blanket of haze—a fog of steam perhaps—was rising.

LEE was aware that Frank and Thomas had managed to shove their way close to him. Thomas was staggering with the projector battery now, and Lee took it to relieve him.

Thomas gasped, "Thanks—heavy as the devil!"

"A city!" said Frank. "Foley! You, over there—keep near us. We must be stopping soon. Let's all keep together."

"Coming," Foley called. "Damn them—they shove—"

But the press of savages yielded a little to his efforts. Lee sensed that most of the throng now were more excited over the storm threat than by the presence of these giants they had captured. He noticed, however, that there were half a dozen individuals who were always close in evidence, who seemed to have constituted themselves as guards.

Foley and Melendez shoved their way until they had joined the others.—Another few hundred yards, and ahead a greater light radiance was visible. Some central point in the little city to which the captives were being hurried, probably. A city of perhaps two thousand people, Lee guessed, though it did not look like a permanent city. Everywhere he saw evidence of its temporary character, as if it were but the encampment of a nomad tribe which had dug itself in here for a short time. Perhaps until an invasion of fire should drive it out. On the other hand, it might be that this place could be held only during the brief polar winter on Vulcan and then must be evacuated, with the savages returning again another year.

Heat fairly recently had penetrated all these subterranean recesses. In places, the walls and roof were a tangle of fused metallic slag; dead ashes were strewn about as if swept into piles to be used as soil. And there were black, dead fire-pits, scarred and pitted by tremendous heat. What a forlorn, embattled existence fate had decreed for these struggling primitive humans on Vulcan!

Thomas gasped, "That noise ahead—what is it? Craig, how can we ever get out of this—get a chance to use our projector?"

How they could find the exit upward, in fact, was a mystery. With the fiery tumult spreading on these dark barren uplands, it was doubtful that they would be able to find their way back to the Starglow. The ship would be engulfed with fire. And Dot—where was Dot in all this?

"That noise," Frank echoed. "Lee—drums.—Hear them?"

The tumult ahead was echoing now with the weird savage rhythm of drum-beats, rising above the shouting turmoil. A call to arms, at least it seemed like that. News of the impending storm had come down here to this central part of the city, and drum-beats were sounding the alarm.

THE tunnel narrowed like a bottleneck, then it opened suddenly into a huge, wide, subterranean amphitheatre. The gathering point. The drum-beats were rising here, in a savage, reiterated note.

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There was so much to see that Lee and his companions could only encompass fragments. They stood in a shallow, bowl-like assembly-room, with a low vault of tangled metal roofing. A throng of milling people were here, waving torches into a glare of light. The place might have been a quarter of a mile across—and perhaps a thousand savages were here, more momentarily arriving by half a dozen different side entrances. Called here by the drum-beats to a conclave.

Lee sensed, however, that this was more in the nature of a place of refuge, with the rest of the city being evacuated now in this crisis. Little family groups stood pressed against the walls, inactive, confused; women tried to protect huddling, terrified children; men stood with them, equally frightened.

Yet it was not all a panic. This was not an unprecedented crisis. The same terrifying emergency had been met before and would have to be met again. It was a necessary thing in the struggle for existence. Lee saw orderly groups of men shifting rocks and chunks of slag against one of the narrow entrances through which all the savages had come, it seemed. The corridor was being closed off, so walling in the amphitheatre and closing off that other section of the city which had been abandoned. Other groups were doing the same at other entrances.

A party of men came bearing great piles of what looked like vegetation—food, being gathered here for the siege. Along one side of the wall it was stacked high.

The Earth-captives were being shoved along one side wall. No more than fifty feet ahead of them now was a low-lying flat ledge of rock resembling a dais—a little balcony platform with a bank of flaming lights over it. A group of men who seemed to be in command were standing there. Older men they were, and one, shriveled and ancient, sat in a stone bench-like chair. Chieftains—leaders of this strange tribe—to whom the captive brown giants were being brought to determine what should be done with them.

Beyond the dais Lee abruptly saw a wide, broken archway. No one was passing in or out of that. They were walling up the smaller tunnels, shutting themselves in here to weather the storm. But how, with mere piles of rock and slag, could they hope to bar the blasts of heat and the consuming fires? And this main opening was being ignored. It was too broken and too wide to wall up—a jagged gash thirty or forty feet across, and nearly fifty feet high.

From it a tumbled, crag-strewn tunnel seemed to lead upward. The glare of the amphitheatre lights shone up it a little distance, and then there was solid, blank darkness. Blank? As Lee stared, he saw a distant red-yellow glare in the tunnel and felt a perceptible incoming air-drift. This was a direct short exit to the outer, upper surface! Lee realized that fact with mingled emotions. The storm, unchecked, might sweep in here. What would the embattled savages do about that? However, the archway might also serve as an exit, a path of escape, for his companions and himself.

The captives were flung forward to the foot of the dais. In all the confusion attending their arrival, with the chieftains gazing down at them curiously, Lee was aware of a cry.

"Lee! Oh—Lee!"

A familiar voice! It struck triumph into him, changing in an instant all the dull hopeless depair within him into a

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bounding exultation. Ten feet from him, backed against the foot of the dais, stood the brown-suited figures of Dot and Tim! Dot, unharmed. Her helmet dangled at her shoulders; her hair tumbled around her pale set face. She and Tim shoved at the men holding them, succeeded in tearing away, and came with a rush to Lee and the others.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LIVING FLAME.

"BLAKE, don't make any error now! Connect it right!" Thomas bent anxiously over Frank, who was working to connect the projector. "Our chance. Thank God, it is! We'll fight our way out of this—and up into that damned storm."

Lee shoved him aside. "You'll have them jumping on us if you use a tone like that. Come away from there—let him alone!"

It seemed in that moment that any tiny thing could sway the balance and change abruptly the whole course of their action and their fate. They were still gathered at the foot of the rock dais, with the tumult of the amphitheatre and the pounding drum-beats around them.

To Lee, with the feeling of triumph upon him at finding Dot unharmed, had come a ray of hope that they could manage to escape from here. The exit was close at hand. There were hardly more than a few scattered groups of people between the dais and the entrance to that dark and rocky tunnel. Though the savages were armed with knives and various crude implements, the party of Earth men, with a sudden rush, might strike their way through. Lee recalled of what flimsy stuff these strange little savage humans were made. Fragile, as though their bodies were mere shells like those of insects. The blow of a fist would smash them. And the chance of a rush should be taken now!

"Frank!" exclaimed Lee. "We're all together here! Whisper to the others! All at once—I'll give the signal by a shout—break away. Wade through this crowd!"

"But the projector—?"

"Leave it! We can't carry it! Let's fight our way on a run and take them by surprise.—Dot! Dot, dear, stay close with me. When we run, look out for their knives. And don't — *don't stumble!*—Keep to your feet, because if you go down—"

But that momentary chance was gone! The shriveled patriarch on the dais had drawn himself erect, his guttural voice issuing commands. A group of the savages pressed suddenly between Frank and Lee. Others seized Dot. Lee and Dot were shoved forward, and the ancient chief wavered to his feet and tottered forward to stare down and examine these tall brown living things more closely. His gaze was not an unfriendly stare, and there was no fear in it. Only wonderment. And it seemed to Lee that in those old and goggling dark eyes which had the wisdom of a lifetime behind them, there was a curious admiration and awe.

Lee held himself tense. A shriveled gray arm came down as the savage stooped. His thin old fingers plucked at Lee, felt of him; and the cracked senile voice flung out a query. And Lee, upon impulse, shook his head and managed a smile.

"Can't understand you."

The chief was a little startled at his voice; then he stooped again, as though

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by peering he might get some understanding of this puzzle. At last he stood up and went into a vehement harangue to his companions of the dais.

IT was all transpiring very quickly. The drum-beats were surging; the preparations for defending the amphitheatre against the coming fire-storm were continuing. Here on the dais, it seemed, the younger chieftains were disturbed and impatient of any delay. Two or three of them broke away from the harangue to give commands to savages who were dashing to the platform for orders.

The prisoners were a lesser incident in the terror of the general emergency. But the venerable patriarch would not be distracted. The party which had brought Lee and the others here were shouting now, and it seemed that they were telling the old chief something about the projector and the battery box. His interest swung that way. Two of the savages pantingly lifted the projector and showed it to him, twitching at its coiled twenty-foot length of wire.

Did the patriarch, an uncivilized primitive, a mere savage, have the wisdom to realize that here was something which he did not understand, and which might be beneficent and powerful for good in this terrorizing crisis? Did superstition inspire him with the faith to feel that these living upright things which looked to him almost human, might have been sent here by an all-wise deity to be of help? The captives were powerful things with roaring voices. His men had told him how powerful they were. And yet one of them had just smiled like a friend! Perhaps they were here miraculously, as allies against the fire?

No one on Earth can ever answer these questions. But at that strange and tense moment they swept Lee, and abruptly he shouted:

"Foley, show him that battery box. Lift it up. Show him how strong you are.—And smile at him. Smile, I tell you! We're friends—make him think we're friends!"

It may have been that the presage of coming events was upon Lee. He was hardly conscious of reasoning what he was saying; but he had a sudden instinctive feeling that the menace of the savages was not the real menace here.

Interest swung to Foley and the others, and to the projector and the battery box. Frank was stooping to hook the two together; and to make the final adjustments on the projector. Dot and Lee were being shoved back toward the rest of the prisoners, who were gathered around Frank. Dot had an opportunity to whisper to Lee fragments of what had happened to her and Tim. She mentioned Sing. Sing! In all this rush, during the few minutes since Dot and Lee had come together, never once had Lee thought of the Chinaman! Sing was not here, and Dot did not know what had happened to him.

FRANK had the projector nearly ready now. The captives were all in a group, with a ring of awed and curious savages around them; and at a little distance the venerable patriarch stood at the edge of the platform, with age-dimmed sight peering down expectantly, hoping perhaps that out of this strange proceeding might come something which miraculously would be good.

Thomas was jubilant. "Our chance! We'll be able to fight our way out of this—"

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But Lee silenced him and shoved him away. There was something strange about this situation, something as yet unknown! Was it Fate? The omnipotent justice of the Creator, who had given the old savage a little divination and would not disappoint him? Or was it a reward for the faith which the shriveled old man had in his god—the same God, perhaps, Who is over those of the Earth? Who could doubt that?

Use the deadly power of the projector against these savages? The skein of swift circumstances did not unravel that way.

Frank rose erect. "Got it! Tim, stand by the battery! Ready with that current switch.—Melendez, you and Foley shift over here by me.—All ready now. Lee, what shall we—"

But Lee did not know. Something had stopped him from turning the projector upon this throng of embattled, terrified people. Women and children were here, faced with death from hostile nature. And that trusting, peering old man—

There was no need for decision. Fate, Providence—call it what you like—intervened.

There came a wild yell of terror from the savage throats near by. The dignitaries on the platform turned and stood staring. All the little gray people here at that end of the amphitheatre were stricken with an awed horror.

The wild yell of alarm spread, and other throats took it up so that it swept across the great cave and reaching the drums, silenced them. Then the yells died to a low buzzing murmur; all these little gray people were murmuring like a restless, expectant audience.

The prisoners were momentarily forgotten. Thomas gasped:

"Why—why, look!—Now's our chance! Turn the beam on them and kill them now. Easy enough. Then we can escape by that tunnel."

But it was toward the tunnel that all the savages were staring; and what they saw they quite evidently understood, though the Earth men did not. The anticipated menace was at hand, and now the whole amphitheatre was expectantly silent, watching to see what the leaders would do about it.

IT was at first a very little thing. Lee and Dot saw it. They shouted to Frank and the others, and all of them stood there and gazed, fascinatedly, wondering what this could mean. A very little thing—at first. A mere small blob of moving red-yellow light, up in the darkness of the ascending tunnel. Was something burning there? A flame?

But it was moving, coming closer. And it grew visibly larger as it approached. Furthermore, it did not spread like a conflagration; in the darkness it held its own solid blob of shape.

Dot gasped. "Why—why, that's what Jackson and I saw! That—a hundred like it were near the Starglow!"

Lee was suddenly aware that the flame was no larger than his own body; and already it was very close. A few hundred feet up the tunnel, not more. It seemed to be clinging to the tumbled rocky floor, and silently it slid forward.

Certainly not over thirty seconds had passed since the approaching flame had been discovered. As Lee stared, though he was incapable of understanding it, the thing seemed horrible, somehow. Nameless and unreasonably gruesome, it was the presage of what was now about to happen.

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The savages had only a brief moment of inactivity. The venerable chief on the dais shouted with his cracked voice, and from somewhere near the Earth-prisoners two savages responded. Then, close together, they shoved through the crowd and made for the mouth of the tunnel. They had been ordered by the chief to run into the tunnel darkness and combat the approaching flame, that was obvious.

Lee, as the pair passed close to him, glimpsed their faces, grim and set. And it seemed that he saw in their expressions the look of men who were going to their death. Together, unarmed save that one of them brandished a stone implement something like a mallet, they dashed into the tunnel and were swallowed by the darkness.

Strange, inexplicable drama! It lasted only a few minutes. The blob of flame was sliding forward, red-yellow. Its blurred edges weaved and shifted like any normal burning object; but Lee realized that it was not just a flame. Rather, something tangible—flaming—an oblong thing the size of a man, creeping forward on hands and knees!

A living thing of flame! Moving of its own volition, and not being consumed by the flames enveloping it.

The two savages reached it, and the little circle of illumination about the monster revealed them leaping from the darkness, pounding upon it with yells of battle. And the fiery thing stopped and fought them.

GRIM and gruesome combat, up there in the rocky darkness. It was very brief, and its details were difficult to see. The bodies of the two savages were lunging gray blobs in the compact glare. They plunged and tore at their flaming adversary, smashing with fists and arms and legs and with the flailing stone mallet at the ponderable yet flimsy body of the monster. The latter reared once as though upon hind legs; like a quivering, ten-foot flame, it wavered upright, then dropped prone again... Once it broke away and slid sidewise across the rocks, with incredible rapidity. But as the savages followed, still yelling defiance, the thing reared up, turned and came back at them.

And now, with what seared mangled hands Lee could only guess at, the two desperate savages were pulling the flaming thing apart—ripping its flimsy, fiery body into segments and strewing them on the rocks. Like men wildly plucking at a fire with naked hands, or scattering the blazing logs and strewing the glowing embers. What might have been a leg or an arm of the dismembered thing lay quivering like an expiring flame. It flickered, then was extinguished. Over a wide spread along the rocks the broken monster quivered.

One of the savages had fallen, and he did not rise; but the other, still screaming with desperate determination, redoubled his efforts. He stamped on the flaming thing now. He made a wild rush at what might have been the glowing remains of its body, stamped and kicked at the expiring flame.

The monster had fought so silently! Or had the sound it made been blotted out by the savage yells of its human attackers? Lee vaguely remembered that he had heard a hissing, a crackling and spluttering of its flames. And now, as it flickered into death, came its voice—a scream of death agony. A wild, eerie sound, unlike anything from human throat; a blast like water fall-

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ing upon hot embers; like the spluttering of water drops sizzling on a red-hot stove grid.

Then it died and the light out in the corridor was gone. One of the savages came staggering back out of the darkness, victorious. Lee caught only a glimpse of him. His hair gone, an arm was burned off, his face was blistered and seared so that one would scarcely have known that he was human. And at that very moment of victory he fell among a waiting group of his companions at the tunnel mouth.

Was it the end of the menace? Scarcely. Only the beginning—the briefest of preludes! Lee saw now that the tunnel was no longer dark! Other blobs of red-yellow light had appeared there; other flaming monsters were coming! Their distant, approaching shapes were in the tunnel. Why, this first fiery thing was but one of a horde. The distant darkness of the tunnel was crawling now with a myriad hideous flames—a horde of fire-monsters!

FULL realization swept over Lee. This, and not the impending fire-storm, was the menace against which the savages had been preparing. A multitude of things of living flame were migrating up here into the polar night, in advance of the fire-storm. Born of its flames, perhaps, its heat giving them sulphurous breath.

They came with the storm, obviously, sensing by what strange natural means no one could guess, that humans were here—living, human bodies which they could consume and which would give a little added life to living flames. Fuel for the conflagration of their bodies to feed upon.

The city was being evacuated; the monsters would overrun it. This amphitheatre was the savages' last stand; and they could not barricade this wide and broken tunnel as they had the several smaller corridors. The fight against the invading flames must be made here.

With that, realization swept Lee and all his companions. Like the savages, they too were embattled here now. This hideous, gruesome swarm of living, flaming monsters was moving like a deluge of flame down the tunnel; an oncoming flood of fire that in another minute would engulf the amphitheatre and everyone in it, savages of Vulcan and Earth humans alike. More than a flood of fire, however, for these were individual monsters, each with a fierce hunger to consume human victims.

They were now individually visible in the tunnel; tiny things like single quivering flames. But others were far larger, and one seemed to be a tremendous glowing dragon—a gigantic python whose looped body undulated forward. Around and over it scrambled a torrent of smaller companions.

Over the turmoil of the amphitheatre the distant blasts and rumbles of the fire-monsters were audible. And to it all Lee added his own shouting voice:

"The projector! We've got to use it on these things! Our fire-suits.—God, Frank, if ever they're to be of use in flames, they'll have to be now!—And, oh, Dot. Please, please stay out of this! Run over to the platform and stay there. — You fellows, carry the battery after us. Frank and I will handle the projector."

The savages suddenly dropped their frantic, terrified activities and stood gaping in awe. The old chieftain on the dais had shouted and told them to make way. He stood peering, and on his wrinkled old face was a vague

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smile of confidence. A miracle here! This was the miracle he had sensed! He stood gazing at the strange, brown-garbed giants. They lifted their two heavy boxes connected by the long thick string, and advanced to the tunnel mouth to do battle for him and his people.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIGHT WITH THE FIRE MONSTERS.

LEE gripped the side of the projector chassis, with Frank helping him carry it. The twenty-foot cable extended along the rocks, and at its end came Tim and the others with the battery box. The tunnel entrance was not far; the milling savages pressed back to make a lane for their advancing champions. It seemed that a sudden silence had fallen, with only an expectant murmuring buzz; but above it the menacing rumbling voice of the monstrous oncoming enemy was horribly audible.

Lee saw presently that they were in the tunnel. Nothing close ahead but dark, tumbled crags, bounded by the broken side-walls. The advancing flaming creatures glared now, with a light that was intensified by the darkness here. The closest of them were not more than three hundred feet away.

"Better drop our vizors, Lee. The heat—"

"Yes, I guess so."

The heat! It came like a furnace blast, surging down the tunnel. Tim's voice was shouting behind them:

"Lee! Wave your arms when you want the current.—Pretty soon? Don't wait!"

"Yes. In a minute—I want to get a little closer—"

"Hadn't we better be nearer you?"

"Yes. All right."

Tim and the others quickened their pace. Foley was helping Tim with the battery. Thomas and Melendez were behind them.—And Dot was there, too. Lee saw it with a wild pounding of his heart.

"Dot, go back!" he cried.

"No!" She was firm.

"Dot, I tell you—"

"I won't! Oh, Lee—I have a fire-suit the same as you. Lee—"

He gave it up. And as he dropped his arm with a hopeless gesture, Dot saw his surrender and came running forward ahead of the others.

"Lee, I couldn't—"

"All right then. But stay close."

They advanced another twenty feet, all grouped now. Melendez was carrying the coiled wire which connected the projector to its battery. Frank saw it.

"Let it loose. Drop it," he ordered.

"*Si, señor.*"

Melendez obediently cast away the wire. It fell to the rocks and dragged in a loop behind them. Melendez was chattering with fear. He plucked at Thomas; murmured something.

Frank shouted, "That's better. We'll put the battery at one place, and shift the projector if we have to. You fellows, now—time to drop the vizors. And after that we won't be able to talk much. The idea is that we are to stay close together. Try to keep the damn things from getting near us—or past us!"

WITH his vizor down, Lee saw all the scene blur for an instant, and then it clarified. The new air swept his face; the menacing heat was gone. He experienced a strange sense of isolation, here within the insulated suit. The bloated brown

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figures of his companions seemed grotesque. Dot, goggled and helmeted, appeared hardly different from the rest, save that she was smaller.

In the midst of the emergency of the present, Lee's mind flung back with a vagrant thought to the past.—Dot, the bronzed fire-nymph in Sir Robert's laboratory, on that day so long ago when first he had met her. Her fire costume then, planned by herself, to show how fire might be dramatically conquered. How different now, her garb! Grim practicality, this present use of Vulco, developed from Sir Robert's ideas two years ago. And this was the real test.

Frank was abruptly putting down the projector. His shouted words were dimly audible—muffled, blurred.

"Good place.—Our stand here."

It was midway between the side-walls of the tunnel—a small ten-foot depression with a circular little rim of strewn boulders. There was a waist-high flat rock. Frank and Lee put the projector upon it, and the panting Foley set the battery on the ground.

They gathered in the small depression to make a desperate stand. The glow of the amphitheatre was a hundred feet or so behind them.

Lee crouched at the projector. "Ready now!—We've got to try—not to let anything get past us."

There were some twenty-five feet of tunnel width on each side of them, to the walls. If any of the crawling, flaming things got past, the projector could not be trained in that direction for its blast of cold would devastate the savages.

The rocky tunnel ceiling was perhaps fifty feet overhead. Lee, with a shout to Frank, added:

"Nor over us.—Nothing must get over us!"

But what if these monsters could fly? Perhaps they would be able to surge upward, carried by the blast of their own heat. Perhaps, also, the projector's cold would be unable to quench their fire. And if it should come to a hand-to-hand conflict, how ponderable were they?

A flood of questions were upon Lee, all in that instant as he raised his arm with the signal to Tim.

The current hissed and spluttered. The two-foot lens-face of the projector glowed—brightened—concentrated its light. Lee's gloved hand was on the switch-lever; Frank swung the pivoted core, training it forward and up the slope toward the slithering flames, now barely a hundred feet distant.

Lee pulled the lever. The solid, concentrated two-foot beam spat forth into the darkness. Not a bolt, but a steady, dead-white ray. It struck with a two-foot swath into the throng of oncoming, flaming creatures. There was an instant—to Lee, an interval most horrible—when the beam clung there, illuminating with its dead-white two-foot circle what now seemed to be a huge round thing of fire. Then the thing reared aloft, rose twenty feet upon the columns of its fiery legs, and its blasting scream of agony rang out.

Lee and Frank trained the projector so that the beam followed the fiery body upward. The cold blasted its flames, every tiny atom stilling its vibrations. Oxidization was checked, the flames were smothered, began to die.

IT seemed that the gruesome body of the thing melted. It darkened, shrank, shriveled. Yet it continued to stand there, poised and stricken upon what now were naked stilts of legs. And its voice still screamed.

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What manner of living thing was this? Sight most horrible! Its flames were gone, smothered in the blast of cold which must have been close to absolute zero. And the human fighters saw that the flames had been like feathers or a growth of hair — now shorn away so that only the dark and shriveled body was left. A ponderable thing, it wavered there upon its flimsy, naked legs. Ice or frost or some congealing moisture must have gathered upon it in the deadly cold. It wavered. Its scream broke. It fell backward—tumbled with stiffened, breaking legs, and splintered on the rocks like a thing of fragile glass.

Dead! One of them dead—one out of the myriads. But the projector was effective. They knew that now. The lowered beam was already cutting a two-foot swath back into the flames—a cold, dead-white gash. Lee could see that the moisture in the humid air was congealing into frost, where the beam struck through; congealing, so that in a moment a little trail of snow was actually beginning to sift down.

With incredible swiftness the tumbling, flaming monsters slithered sidewise. The cold air frightened even those which as yet were untouched. Like a leaping wave of flame on a sea of oil, they surged with a muttering roar against the tunnel-sides. Their tumbling bodies pressed each other upward, and tongues of flame shot to the ceiling. The flimsy bodies were wafted up, to fall down again into the scrambling press of their fellows.

Frank and Lee grimly swung the projector. The oscillating beam swept the rocks in an arc, laying a white film of ice upon the tunnel walls. It cut its deadly, swinging swath through the tumbling flames, and the rocks were strewn with gruesome, broken, splintered fragments of the things which a moment before had been living flames but now were dead. A wild pandemonium—the roar of an assaulted conflagration—the mingled death screams from a thousand eerie voices.

All in a minute. Certainly no more. Lee could feel the blast of cold air around him, chilling even through the insulation of his garments. He saw that the press of monsters, like a yielding wall, had been thrust sidewise and backward. The projector had a range of some three hundred feet, and even that far back the flames were dying. Beyond, he saw the things were retreating. The press of them, surging backward, struggling to get away from the cold, crowding the distant tunnel, had become a veritable rout. Uncounted thousands were fighting their way back to the open air . . .

VICTORY!—But was it? In another instant Frank and Lee were wildly swinging the projector, and the other men stood stricken. Dot was crouched against Lee's legs. The sidewise thrust of the things had brought many of them forward. They were coming down both sides, close along the wall — bouncing — slithering—moving, some of them, with great leaps so that the flames enveloping their bodies hissed like a swung torch.

Some of them were close before the little upstanding circle of boulders in the center of which was the projector. One surged up overhead like a three-foot fire-ball. Lee and Frank, wildly manipulating the beam, turned it upward. The floating thing hissed, screamed, was quenched, and fell to one side.

"Now!" shouted Frank. "To the right!"

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Half a dozen more over there. The beam swept toward them.

But one got past—and to the left. Others, too, to the left.

They were getting too close now. Individual scurrying things—one here, one there. It took too long for the beam to pick them off and extinguish them one at a time, now that they were no longer massed. Lee was suddenly aware that the wild, sidewise swings of the projector were endangering Dot and the men grouped here.

"Frank!—Easy! Watch out! You fellows, crouch down. We might have to swing the beam over your heads!"

He saw them crouch. He shoved Dot flat against his feet, and bent backward to let the swinging beam go past him. That one, at least, was done for! A great, pot bellied flaming torch. He had seen its eyes—white-hot pools of flame, glaring at him just before the creature itself had gone dark.

Another here.—No, it was past! Blazing down the tunnel toward the amphitheatre—a python of fire. It seemed at least ten feet long. It coiled, then extended its body like a great yellow-red, glowing poker.

"No!—Frank, no!" Lee gripped the swinging projector cone. "Can't—flash that direction—"

The savages would have to deal with that one that had escaped. Lee saw the turmoil of the amphitheater entrance. A group of savages were rushing forward to combat the incoming monster.

"Lee!—Lee!"

Dot was pounding at his ankles. He felt her rise up; he saw Thomas, Tim and the others standing also. A monster was here, too close. So horribly close!

It came leaping—a sizzling, oblong thing. The beam, as Frank desperately swung it, only grazed the blazing six-foot body; and in that instant the flaming thing came sliding over the near-by boulder-rim. Under the beam, and too close to hit it!

Lee staggered from the projector. The monster was here upon them. Its light was dazzling—a furnace glare that blurred everything. Even through his vizor Lee felt the heat-blast and smelled the thing's acrid, gas-fume breath.

Combat most horrible! The projector was overturned, and fell with a crash to the rocks. Lee realized vaguely that it was broken—wrecked—useless now. What of it! All of those in the little pit were wildly lunging against the living flame. A six-foot thing? It seemed suddenly to have expanded, streamers of fire leaping and hissing from it.

LEE and the others were desperately flailing their arms; lunging, kicking, beating against this eager, lusting fire which struggled to consume them. Lee was wading in it, his arms swinging. He knocked against one of his companions. Something solid—was there nothing of this monster which was solid? Light and heat—flames—a breath like a blow-torch. And sounds from it, too; hissing and seething noises, and then an eerie, animal scream.

Abruptly, Lee's groping, gloved hands touched its body. The thing was only the size of a huge dog! He found himself on his knees, gripping it, wrestling with it. The body yielded within his arms like rubber—melting, burning rubber, viscous and sticky. It seemed to ooze out upon him, to envelop and flow around him.

Now he could feel its clutch; the sucking, enveloping grip of fiery quicksand struggling to engulf its victim.

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Was that its face? An eye, glaring white hot. A maw—a breath with an incinerating blast against his insulated shoulder, so hot that he felt it burning through the Vulco fabric, striking his bronzed, Vulco-smeared skin like the stab of a white-hot knife. Death! Death for him, all in this instant. He was choking—gasping—lunging.

And then he broke through. It seemed that he had split the thing apart. He staggered, wavered back, fell against his companions. All of them were kicking and slashing the monstrous thing to fragments.

The embers of it now were dwindling. Its voice held together with a last deafening screech of agony, then even the voice died. The fragments were cooling rapidly, congealing to fragility. Lee found himself kicking against little dismembered parts of the body. Like glass splintering they were.

The smoke rolled upward and away. The cool air, then the cold air of the tunnel came rushing in. Lee and the others stood panting. And at their feet lay strewn the dying embers, so scattered and so shrunken that in the darkness only the burned stench of them was apparent . . .

"The last one, Lee!" Tim was gripping him with a half-hysterical shout of triumph. "Got it—we got it! That's all. They're gone. We've routed them!"

Darkness was here. The last of the monsters had retreated up the tunnel. Back in the amphitheatre the savages were in a tumult. They had killed the two or three fire monsters which had slipped past the Earth-men. And at the far side of the lighted amphitheatre it seemed that the savages were fighting near the blocked corridor entrances. But none of the monsters had gotten through there. It was a winning fight, and the cold air from the tunnel was sweeping the amphitheatre. The flaming things trying to squeeze through the blockading stone-piles must have felt it, discouraging them so that presently they turned back.

THE fight was over. In the tunnel the panting, spent party of Earth-men stood for a moment gazing. In the amphitheatre the venerable chief on the dais was now shouting. He pointed up the tunnel as though to show his people that the combat there had been won. The strange human beings whom they had captured had come as conquerors, as saviors representing the Almighty, and they had performed His miracles.

In the unaccustomed coolness of the big assembly room the savages may have shivered a little, stiffened by the chill. But cold, which never had been felt by them before, could hardly be frightening. The reverse, since heat had always been their menace from nature.

Suddenly they were all kneeling, facing the tunnel; and on the dais, the old chief raised his arms with an invocation.

Lee suddenly thought of the Starglow. The storm up there—which to these savages was clearly a lesser evil, but to the Earth people was an unknown menace. The storm—what had it done to the Starglow?

Lee turned. Up the tunnel he saw the glare of the storm plainly. An intensified storm. In these minutes passed, it had grown incomparably worse! There could be no question of that. Its flashing glare was unbelievable; its rumbling, cataclysmic crashing was audible now above the voice of the praying chief. Why, the whole surface uplands would rage with the

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heat of an incinerator. The Starglow would surely be destroyed, melted to nothingness in the blasts of the storm!

Lee found his voice. "Got to get out of here!—That storm—if our ship is destroyed—"

Marooned here on this alien little planet forever!

The projector lay cracked and smashed at their feet—useless. They leaped over it, left it lying there. With panting, frantic haste they ran forward up the tunnel—a thousand feet, perhaps, toward the mounting heat and glare and roar outside.

They came to the tunnel mouth, stood there an instant, awed and terrified.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE FIRE-STORM.

WHICH way, over these glaring uplands, was the Starglow? As the little party stood awed in the tunnel entrance, it seemed so hopeless, so desperate a question.

Yet instantly it was answered. Was this a miracle for them now, as they had been a miracle for the savages? The distance they had traveled along the underground tunnels must have turned them back toward the ship. The savages had not used this nearer entrance, for at the time when they took their captives, the fire-monsters were gathering here.

Lee saw the light at the dome-peak of the Starglow. A bursting glare in the sky seemed to envelop all the world in blinding red and yellow flame. The Starglow's little beacon was engulfed; but in an instant it showed again, and not far away. A mile, perhaps.

A mile across these tumbled, rocky uplands, storm-lashed now by flame? Not far?—An eternity of terror. But the ship still was safe. Barely hull-down against the horizon.

"There she is!" Lee shouted. "Come on—a run for her."

They stumbled out into the open. A crazy, circular wind sucked and slapped at them as they ran. Lee clung to Dot. Frank and Tim went past them to lead the way, with Foley, Thomas and Melendez close at hand.

"Don't get separated!" Frank was calling. "Follow us—"

His closed vizor muffled his words, and the roar and crackle of the wind pulled at them and flung them away. Lee felt the scorching heat through his suit; it gripped him, beat through the vizor against his face, with the choking smell of gas and smoke.

The rocks ahead were painted with a lurid red and yellow. The grotesque, helmeted figures of Frank and Tim scrambled forward among the crags, smoke swirling around them so that at times, though they were only a few feet distant, it almost blotted them out.

Lee realized that the ground was soft and yielding under his feet—melting in the heat. Its metal slag was fusing, was being raised to the ignition point so that soon it would glow, or burst into flame. Already it was glowing in places, and a round depression showed a little eating crater of fire. Frank and Tim turned aside to avoid it.

Other holes of fiery radiance were opening everywhere. A hundred feet away, a narrow rift in the ground opened as though an earthquake had that instant torn it—a long, ragged gash, with fire running like a will-o'-the-wisp along its edges as the heated gases from below were ignited.

The ground was soft—sticky—a morass. A yielding, gruesome quick-

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sand, every moment becoming more fluid. The Starglow seemed so far away! Glaring puffs of gigantic, gaseous flame overwhelmed it; but always it showed again, unharmed.

LEE'S thoughts were racing with the chaos of the scene around him. There were no fire monsters here; all this was the fiery turmoil of an insane nature. Or were the fiery living things lurking here? Amid these opening pits and geysers of flame, this swirling smoke and the firebrands dropping from the glare overhead, the monsters would hardly have been noticed.

Lee saw what might be the fire-valley out of which they had gotten the precious chunks of *zelium*. A mile or so away it was, flinging upward toward the clouds a fountain of flames, as if it were a great blast furnace. A solid, roaring spout of fire, a gigantic funnel-shaped tongue that licked against the clouds.

The clouds? They were black gas-masses—whirling cones of gray-green vapors. They lashed and tumbled one upon the other. Great banks of them rose in serrated tiers against the circling horizon. Overhead they swirled and gyrated. One of them puffed into yellow flame; a dazzling, silent glare, followed in a second or two by an eerie thunderclap. From another gas-cloud, suddenly reaching its ignition-point, a great, jagged tongue of flame shot out like a lightning bolt, horizontally across all the sky until it struck another concentrated mass of gas and ignited it into a giant puff of fire.

Dot staggered and fell. Lee bent down to pick her up. It seemed that her bloated brown suit was smoking, scorching, turning black. God! They could not keep this up very long. The roaring, flaming heavens were dripping fire now. Liquid, fiery raindrops were slanting down on the wind. A rainstorm of flame!—Or did it more nearly resemble snow? Crimson snowflakes, each a brief tiny puff—falling firebrands, like pelting hailstones. One, as large as Lee's head, struck his smoking shoulders and bounced off.

He saw the staggering forms of Foley, Melendez and Thomas go on. Their heavy boots seemed to be bloated by the viscous, glowing ooze of the melting ground. Their boots?—Their feet, here, were level with his face! Lee suddenly realized that he and Dot were lying on the ground. He had not picked her up. He had stooped and fallen with her, lying there numbed, with wondering thoughts and fading senses. This was a peril that could only be compared to that of a blizzard.

And it meant death.—Up! Get up! Follow the others!

Brown legs and feet appeared.

"Lee!—Good God!"

Tim and Frank had come back.

"Dot!—Can't you get up?"

"Yes—"

She too was numbed, bewildered.

Lee staggered erect, pulled at Dot's arm. She regained her feet.

Frank's voice said, "Almost there. See—"

Through the haze of smoke and the hell of dripping, whirling fire the Starglow showed close at hand. Still intact, her ladder slanting up from the smoking rocks. Thomas, Melendez and Foley had almost reached the ladder.

THOSE last few feet were a blurred chaos to Lee. He clung to Dot.

Then Frank had stumbled and fallen, but they pulled him erect. A wall

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of flame seemed to be following them — the blast of an ignited sand-storm. The sky burst downward with a red-yellow tongue which struck close behind the ship, silhouetting it for an instant, black and monstrous.

Here was the foot of the ladder. Frank and Tim shoved Dot upon it, and shoved Lee after her. Now they were all on the ladder. It seemed to sway—or was that Lee's swaying, blurred senses?

He saw Foley's giant figure gain the deck, saw him jerk Thomas and Melendez after him. Then Dot was at the top, and Lee was shoving her to the deck.—Safe! Safe at last!

But what was this? Thomas, with his helmet thrown back, had seized Dot. Foley and Melendez were crouching at the ladder-head. They, too, were unhelmeted. Lee saw the leer on their faces, and saw that Dot was struggling with Thomas. For realization swept over her at the same moment that it swept over Lee. She screamed:

"Lee! Look out for them—!"

He saw, in that stricken instant, that Melendez and Foley were crouching to fling him back, to throw him upon Tim and Frank and so cast all three back into the flaming turmoil of the storm. Thomas and his two cohorts would then take the chance of navigating the ship to Earth with its treasure. And the treasure was here—the glistening, violet-crystal chunks of *zelium* still lay here on the deck.

A single, stricken instant of realization, then Lee gathered all his last desperate strength and lunged forward. He missed Foley and struck Melendez. A knife flashed—a knife which all the time while they were among the savages the sly Melendez had concealed about his person. The blade bit into Lee's shoulder as his plunge carried him and Melendez backward to the deck.

Foley was for an instant confused. He turned to assail Lee, who was rolling on the deck, fighting the snarling Melendez; then he turned back to the ladder. But in that moment of indecision, Frank and Tim were at the ladder-head and were upon him.

Melendez's knife stabbed again. Lee caught its blade in his gloved hand and it cut through his glove. But he clung to it, and the blade snapped. He flung it away and struck with his fist, down at Melendez's face, which was under him.

Dot was still struggling with Thomas. Lee could see them in the lurid light across the deck. Then Thomas struck her—flung her down. Lee felt Melendez go limp from the blow in the face; and he rose up and lunged against Thomas, who was rushing for him.

Frank was down. The giant Foley was raging, grappling with Tim. They stumbled against a chunk of the *zelium;* they fell, still locked together. And Lee was vaguely aware that as they rolled, Foley was lifting a lump of *zelium,* trying to crash it upon Tim's head.

Lee could not see the blow, for he and Thomas were locked together, on their feet, wildly lunging. The deck seemed to burst into glaring light. Was the ship itself on fire? No, not yet. The glare came through the transparent dome from the flaring sky above.

LEE was gasping, for the air here choked him. No, more than that—it was the grip of Thomas's hands on his throat. He plucked at them, jabbed a fist at Thomas's face, and heard his adversary's grim voice:

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"You—got you now! We don't—need any of you any longer.—Just want the girl—"

Dot—where was Dot? Then he saw her rising to her feet. But Foley was up now; standing erect and towering above the prostrate forms of Tim and Frank. Lee was forcing Thomas backward, bending him; and abruptly he fell, with Lee on top of him. Still he held his grip on Lee's throat, however.

What was this? Lee's roaring senses focussed on a shadow that came from the near-by doorway oval—a shadow—a man. He wore no Vulco suit; instead, he was garbed in loose trousers and square black jacket. A little man with shaved head and a pigtail. Sing! He was still here, having hidden deep in the hull corridors during the attack of the savages, so that they had not found him. Inscrutable Oriental—he had joined these brigands of space only by pretense, seeing no chance of opposing them.

Ever since the murder of Sir Robert he had been loyal to Dot and the others. He had waited, with blank, expressionless face, for a chance to help them. And the chance was now here!

The Chinaman came like a darting shadow from the door oval. Foley did not see him. The panting giant was at the head of the ladder, and Sing's hurtling body struck him, knocking him backward. He straightened, wavered, clutched wildly for an instant, then lost his balance and crashed through the frail ladder rail and fell.

The Chinaman swung back to the deck. Lee was under Thomas now; the grip on Lee's throat had loosened, and Thomas was pounding at him with flailing fists. Lee heard Sing's squealing, triumphant yell, saw the Chinaman stoop and lift the inert body of Melendez, shoving it to the ladder and tumble it down.

Then Thomas was aware of his new antagonist. He jerked himself loose from Lee and staggered to his feet. But Sing met him with a frenzied yelp.

For a moment they rocked at the ladder-head, then Thomas also tumbled backward, and a great sheet of fire seemed to leap up from the rocks to meet him.

As he fell into the flaming darkness, his voice was screaming with a last terror.

The end of the brigands!

Frank was now on one elbow, and Tim was staggering to his feet. Dot came wavering forward.

"You!—Oh, Sing—"

But the little Chinaman suddenly collapsed. "Him too much fire here.—No air—"

No air—too much fire! All were choking; the deck was blistering in the heat; the red-yellow glare from outside was like a solid wall against the ship.

Lee staggered past Dot.

"Got to close everything—this—the other ports. Got to get the ship away—"

The flames seemed to be licking at his face as he fumbled for his torn vizor panel. He stooped and cast off the ladder, and it dropped into the flare of a furnace.

NOW Tim and Frank were helping him slide the heavy door shut. Blessed respite!

Frank shouted, "The other ports—quick, everybody!"

And he was answered by the Chinaman's gasping voice, "Sing make them all closed long time ago."

"Then we're ready to get the ship away! Lee, you know the workings

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of the ventilating system. Speed it up.—Try and clear out these fumes."

Tim came lurching forward. "Shall I go below—if you should need the manual shifters?"

"Yes. But we left the pressure up. Make sure of that—then come and join me in the turret."

"You go with him, Dot," Lee called.

They were running to their posts. The Chinaman, his work done, stood watching them.

Lee, in a moment, was with the others in the turret. And then Tim came. The air pressure in the shifters was adequate. The Starglow was lifting.

The dome seemed to be engulfed in solid fire now. With the ports closed, it was a conflagration, with the roar and sizzling blasts all barred. An inferno of soundless flames licked at the ship, blasting it. Were the hull plates fusing? Would the dome and deck bull's-eyes crack?

Lee felt the vessel tremble and lift as the first of the gravity-plates shifted. The seething, smoking glare of the melting rock-ramp dropped away. They gained a little altitude—a hundred feet—two hundred. The glowing surface seemed suddenly to be sliding sidewise. The Starglow rocked, and a curtain of liquid red raindrops pelted the dome. But like a feather in a gale, the ship was whirled away by the hot roaring blast.

The surface was dropping, however, A dark gas cloud overhead burst with a puff of red glare, and for a moment a great sheet of flame seemed to engulf all the world. The Starglow was in the clouds now, and it seemed that a rising funnel of heat was tossing the clouds and the tiny ship upward. Like the draft in a roaring chimney, or a mounting geyser of flaming gas.

Was this the end—the end of this little world—the end of the Starglow? For a despairing moment Lee thought so. Dot's pale face was staring at him as she sat clutching him in the quivering, lurching turret.

Was it the flaming end of everything for them all?

Then the incandescent glare dropped away, and the tossing ship burst upward into the blessed starlight. The stars!

"We did it!" gasped Frank. "All right now! The dome's holding!"

A silent night sky was overhead. Beneath, like a great storm-lashed sea of fire, lay the flaming stretch of clouds. In one place they were broken, revealing the rocky, polar surface of Vulcan—a fused incandescence now, a melting hell of fire. Then a monstrous curtain of blazing gas and turgid green-edged smoke dropped like a shroud to obscure it.

With increasing velocity the little Starglow swept upward and away, into the calm, cold silence of inter-planetary space . . .

CHAPTER XVI.

RETURN TO EARTH.

"IT looks rather good, Dot."

"Yes, doesn't it?"

Return to Earth. The voyage back had been an uneventful one—uneventful by comparison with the flight outward—and now, after twelve long day-intervals, Lee and Dot sat in the forward lookout cubby at the top of the ten-foot mast, gazing at the great, reddish disk of Earth, hanging in advance of the Starglow's bow . . .

The bodies of those who had been killed on the Starglow had been buried in space. There were several of the

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savages, and Sir Robert and Jackson, and little Bandy.

Burial! Strange misnomer for this interment in the wide void of the Universe! Silently the survivors had gathered and watched the wrapped bodies as Frank slid them into the ship's deck pressure-port.—The pumps had exhausted some of the air within the small chamber located forward on the deck, near the point of the bow; then the outer door of the port was opened and the remaining air rushed out into the vacuum of space, carrying the bodies with it.

The bodies of the savages, by some odd chance, clung together; Jackson was alone; and the body of Bandy was with Sir Robert—a large, white, oblong bundle, and a small one. Sheet-wrapped, all of the other bodies slowly fell—astronomical bodies now. But the little bundle of Bandy began slowly to revolve like a satellite around Sir Robert; and both would have encircled the greater mass of the Starglow forever, had not Frank used a repulsion of the hull-plates to force them away.

The watchers on the Starglow's deck stared long at the falling white blobs as they gathered velocity and hurtled away, drawn by the myriad forces of the starfield, seeking in the pathless emptiness an orbit of their own . . .

The silent, moist-eyed girl at his side, Lee watched the two dwindling bodies. The larger, as it were, still the master, even in death, with the faithful little dog hovering near him. A moment—and then they were gone, forever to travel onward.

To Lee this burial seemed so much more inspiring than the placing of a dead body to rot in the ground.

THAT was days in the past now; and Lee and Dot sat in the lookout tower, gazing at the nearing disk of Earth, their native Earth! It struck them into silence. Never before had homecomers come back from so vast a journey as this one . . . There, outlined by that dark tracery, were the continents of the Western world. There was the North Atlantic Ocean, mottled by cloud-banks. The Sun was edging the Rocky Mountains with gold, and the Moon was casting its silver light upon England.—All so familiar, so welcoming. And best of all, they were coming home with their treasure, the precious *zelium*, with which they would fight disease and help spread health and greater happiness to all the people of their world.

But as Lee sat with Dot's hand on his arm, happy in the knowledge of her love, his mind flung back to the turbulent little planet they had left. Those savages there, embattled underground and struggling for their poor, forlorn existence against a hostile, raging nature—had they in the end been overwhelmed by the fire-storm? Or had they survived it, as they must have survived others, and struggled on? The picture of that venerable chieftain standing on the dais, holding amidst all the terror of a desperate situation a faith in his Creator—the picture was vivid in Lee's mind.

And it seemed to Lee, as he pondered it, that we of a more fortunate world are not fully aware of our blessings.

THE END

More Fantastic Stories Soon

By OTIS ADELBERT KLINE and RAY CUMMINGS

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MEN of
by STOOKIE ALLEN
A ROVING FIGHTER.
"Tex," otherwise Edward S. O'Reilly, was born in Denison, Texas in 1880 of fighting Irish and American stock. His dad ran a ranch in West Texas. Between times, as an itinerant building contractor, he took his family about in a covered wagon. Thus "Tex" began his career of roaming in infancy.
TEX O'REILLY
SOLDIER
TEX WAS A BOY OF NINE WHEN THE SETTLERS' RUSH INTO INDIAN TERRITORY WAS ON. HE SAW SOME REAL GUN PLAY BETWEEN OPEN RANGE CATTLEMEN AND NEW ARRIVALS IN OKLAHOMA BENT ON PUTTING UP BARBED WIRE FENCES. ONE HEATED ROW BROKE OUT WITH TEX RIGHT IN THE LINE OF FIRE.
YOUNG O'REILLY ATTENDED SCHOOL IN TEXAS AND CHICAGO. AT THE START OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR, TEX, THOUGH ONLY 17, ENLISTED IN THE FOURTH INFANTRY AND GOT INTO SOME HOT ACTION AROUND SANTIAGO. IN THE CHARGE ON EL CANEY'S BLOCKHOUSE DEFENSES, TEX ROUTED SEVERAL SPANIARDS WHILE TAKING ONE PRISONER.
SENT TO THE PHILIPPINES HE WENT ON A RECONNAISSANCE WITH A SMALL FORCE ALONG THE IMUS RIVER. TRAPPED IN A RICE BOG AMBUSCADE BY THE INSURRECTOS EACH SOLDIER FACED TEN TO ONE ODDS. TEX WAS CARRYING A WOUNDED SERGEANT ON HIS BACK WHEN A DOZEN BOLO MEN CLOSED IN ON HIM. DROPPING THE DISABLED MAN, HE FOUGHT OFF THE ATTACK WITH HIS BAYONET UNTIL OTHER TROOPERS CAME TO HIS AID. HE WAS CITED FOR THE MEDAL OF HONOR!

This feature appears in ARGOSY every week

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DARING

LATER AS A MEMBER OF THE PHILIPPINE SCOUTS, O'REILLY RAN AHEAD OF AN ATTACKING FORCE OVER A REPAIRED PART OF A PAMBANGA RIVER BRIDGE. SEEING INSURRECTOS PLACING DYNAMITE AGAINST AN ABUTMENT, TEX LEAPED DOWN TO THE SPOT JUST AS THE BROWN MEN SCURRIED OFF. A SMOKING FUSE HAD TO BE CUT. LACKING A KNIFE TEX BIT THROUGH IT WITH HIS TEETH! HIS MOUTH WAS SEVERELY BURNED.

OUTSIDE OF TIENTSIN, DURING THE BOXER UPRISING IN 1900, TEX, CARRYING A MESSAGE, WAS PICKED OFF IN A RICE FIELD BY A CHINESE SHARPSHOOTER. SHOT IN THE LEG AND UNABLE TO MOVE OUT OF THE MUD, HE OWED HIS LIFE TO AN AMERICAN DOCTOR WHO FOUND HIM WHILE SEARCHING FOR WOUNDED SOLDIERS. BEFORE THEY GOT BACK TO THEIR LINES THEY AND FOUR HUGE RUSSIAN RESCUERS HAD TO DISPERSE A FORCE OF TWO HUNDRED PURSUING BOXERS.

TEX WENT ON HIS OWN AFTER HE GOT OUT OF THE SCOUTS. IN HIS SUBSEQUENT CAREER AS A SOLDIER OF FORTUNE HE SERVED IN THE KOREAN EMPEROR'S BODYGUARD; HE WAS DRILL MASTER IN THE CHINESE IMPERIAL ARMY; HE CONDUCTED AN ENGLISH SCHOOL IN JAPAN, AND FOUGHT IN 4 REVOLUTIONS IN MEXICO AND SOUTH AMERICA.

HE WAS SO BUSY FIGHTING ABD-EL-KRIM WITH THE SPANISH FOREIGN LEGION IN MOROCCO THAT HE DIDN'T GET INTO THE WORLD WAR UNTIL TOO LATE TO FIGHT. IT WAS HIS BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT.

Next Week: George Kennan, the telegrapher who turned explorer

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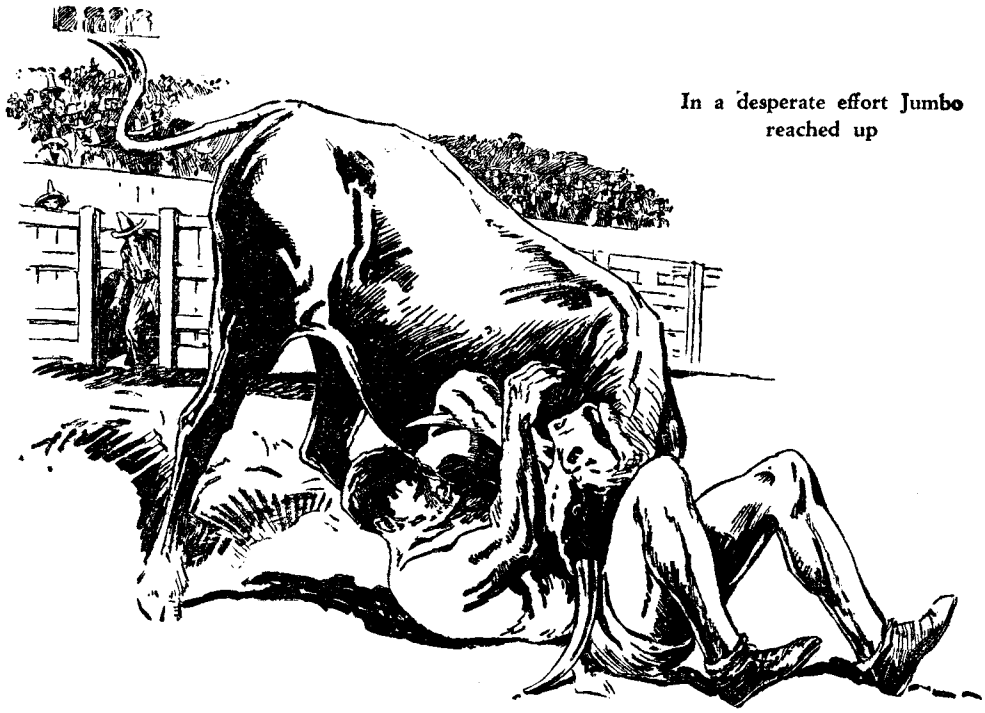

In a desperate effort Jumbo reached up

Chicken Jumbo

By JOHN A. THOMPSON

Was Jumbo Getts yellow? His wrestling contest with the bull would decide

"IT'S coffee and, ain't it?"

"And what?"

"Doughnuts, dummy! The way you're goin', you'll be wrasslin' for buttons next, and glad to get 'em."

"Johnny, now what would I do with buttons?"

Johnny Wayne, regarding the giant opposite him with supreme disgust, wondered how so much meat and bone, especially bone, could have been welded into just one man.

Jumbo Getts, known to an increasingly apathetic coterie of mat fans as the Human Landslide, Half Man and Half Mountain, was indeed a huge specimen. He possessed legs that belonged on a grand piano. His chassis was constructed along the lines of a Mack truck. The big fellow sat disconsolately on the ancient iron bedstead in a border town, second rate hotel room, and the groaning springs sagged almost to the floor at the spot where pressure was greatest.

Johnny, lithe, lightly built, with a flair for cheap suits of loud pattern and a razor edge crease to his trousers offered a sharp contrast to the big man. Johnny had been a sports writer for a West Coast daily, but quit the racket to manage the Man Mountain. All he

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had left of his dream of achieving fame and fortune as Jumbo's guide and mentor was a growing suspicion that his behemoth was chicken hearted.

Getts had beef and brawn. He could grunt and make swell faces. He should have been a box office attraction on any mat card. He knew the holds. But he lacked fire. The will to win never burned in his hairy, barrel chest. To him the Spirit of '76 was just another ghost story.

Getting a match for the Man Mountain had become increasingly difficult of late, wherefore Johnny had agreed to a unique bout across the border in Mexico. He was having trouble selling Jumbo on the idea. Getts could think of more objections than a trial counsel.

"Gee," he rumbled gloomily, "a fellow can't get no hiplock on a bull, or no flying tackle neither."

"It's just a gag," snapped Johnny. "And it ain't bad. Jumbo Getts, the Human Landslide versus El Toro, King of the Four Footed Beasts of the Pampas. Best two out of three falls."

"I heard them Mexican bulls has sharp horns."

"Listen, mug, I've seen little bits of cow hands, no bigger'n a flea, bulldog steers at a rodeo. This is the same thing only we're goin' to call it a wrasslin' match." Wayne tapped a cigarette on the end of his thumb nail, lit it.

"I'd rather wrestle a man."

"Yeah? You ain't forgot what the papers called you after Cobra Clark tossed you out of the ring in San Diego, and you crept back, lay down and started snorin' . . ."

"I was just tryin' to get my breath, Johnny."

"Uh-huh, but you don't have to go to sleep to breathe. 'Chicken' Jumbo. That's the monicker they pinned on you, and it'll stick till you show the fans different." Johnny suddenly became serious. "Look here, Getts. This is your big chance to show the world you've really got what it takes —nerve. Get a fall out of this he-cow and you'll be a made mat attraction just the same as if you were born with a Polack name."

"I—I guess you're right, Johnny."

Johnny sighed. There were times when Jumbo was a hard man to handle. But now that the big man was willing, Johnny hustled him over to Rio Rojo to sign up before he changed his mind. They went directly to Don Ramos Querido's pennon-decked bull ring. Querido wasn't around, but his daughter sat in the office, manicuring rose-tinted finger nails.

THE girl was good looking, dark and sinuous, and although she listened to Johnny's speech, her flashing eyes never once left the Man Mountain.

"*Señor,* you wrestle weeth thee bull, no?" She smiled at Jumbo.

"Sugar," snapped Johnny, who was used to getting the female attention for the pair, "Jumbo would very likely wrassle a cage full of wildcats."

"Not very wild cats, Johnny. I don't want for you to have this jane get me wrong."

"You are ver' brave man, no?" The girl ignored Johnny completely, and her smile was doing strange things to Jumbo's insides.

Johnny shrugged. "Okay, baby. Some like 'em big, instead of brainy." He helped himself to a cigar from a box on Don Ramos's desk.

"What's your name, huh?" grunted Jumbo.

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"Serafina Clemencia Cortez y Querido."

Jumbo strained his ears to get it all. Just then Don Ramos entered. He waved his daughter out of the room, sat down. His conversation was brief, his manner businesslike.

Johnny signed the contract with a flourish. Jumbo affixed his signature, only half aware of what he was doing. His eyes were directed towards the closed door through which Serafina had departed. He hoped she would come back.

She didn't.

Outside, in the dusty street, Johnny plucked impatiently at the wrestler's sleeve.

"Quit moonin'. We gotta find a bulldoggin' expert. Maybe there's one in a saloon somewhere. Let's look. I heard they was mostly heavy drinkers."

At the fourth bar they found Snakebite Jackson, a bowlegged, wiry Texan with a cheerful face, the features of which had been severely flattened by many a headlong slide on the floor of a dirt corral.

Snakebite claimed to be the champion steer thrower of Cactus Valley, and produced a sheaf of well-worn newspaper clippings to prove it.

Johnny ruffled through the press notices. "I'll take your word for it," he muttered, and proceeded to explain about the forthcoming match between Jumbo and a Mexican bull.

"Nothin' to it," said Jackson modestly. "I'll show you." He placed a sinewy hand on Jumbo's neck. The other he spread across the big man's face. "Jest grab aholt thisaway, dig yore heels into the ground, and pour it on him."

The Texan gave Jumbo's face a wrench. Jumbo remained solid. Snakebite jerked again, harder this time.

"She's b e a u t i f u l, ain't she, Johnny?" murmured the Man Mountain.

"Huh?"

"Serafina, I mean."

Snakebite gazed at the face in his grasp with new interest. "The Querido dame?"

Jumbo nodded.

"Lay off that baby, brother. She's pizen as a nest o' rattlers. Git yuh into trouble, shore." Snakebite began a racy reminiscence, and failed to notice the look that crept into Jumbo's mild gray eyes. As he reached the point of his narrative, he felt Jumbo's huge hand reach down and grab him by the gun belt.

The next instant the champion bulldogger of Cactus Valley was lifted clear of the ground in a sweeping, effortless move and sent hurtling head first through a pair of flimsy swing doors. He landed with a thud on the sidewalk outside.

Jumbo wiped his hands together and gazed into the bottom of his empty beer glass. "Guys which can't say good of a beautiful woman ought to keep their traps shut, Johnny."

But Johnny was no longer beside him. Jumbo's manager had rushed out to the sidewalk, reaching it just as Snakebite painfully raised himself on one elbow and sought desperately to free his six-gun from its holster.

On occasion Johnny could be very persuasive, and he felt this was an occasion that would tax his powers. Yet in spite of his fast talking and his profuse apologies to Snakebite for a regrettable accident, his heart was thumping wildly.

He could have rushed in and kissed Jumbo for the first outburst of real

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spirit the Man Mountain had ever displayed. If a smile from a Mexican jane could fill Jumbo with sufficient temper to toss a Texas cowboy fifteen feet, Johnny was all for more and better girl trouble. But first he managed to mollify Jackson, and arranged for him to give Getts his first lesson in cow throwing in the morning.

Then he decided to help his wrestler's romance along.

"You ought to send Serafina some flowers," he suggested.

"Gee, you think she'd like 'em?"

"What dame don't?"

The flowers were sent with a tender card written by Johnny, but signed "Jumbo." Johnny was treading the clouds. Somehow he felt that everything was going to be all right. He decided to celebrate. Jumbo was a good guy, after all.

WHAT with one thing and another, mostly liquor, it was late at night when the two of them started back for the border gate. They picked their way down a badly lighted side street, Johnny humming a song, something about how deep is the ocean.

Suddenly Jumbo snapped his head to one side. There was a sinister whir, a flash and a glistening knife blade sped past him to land quivering in an adjacent door sill.

Johnny stopped singing abruptly. He wheeled around and out of the corner of his eyes he caught a glimpse of a thin-legged Mexican disappearing in the murk of a dark alley across the street.

"Somebody's bettin' on the bull already, Johnny," muttered Jumbo. Without emotion he reached over to the door sill and yanked the knife from the wood.

"Either that, or they don't like my singing." Johnny tried to laugh as he took the blade from Jumbo and thrust it into his jacket pocket. "Let's beat it."

Not, until they were safely back in their hotel room, did Johnny take time to remove the knife, a deadly, sharp-bladed dagger, from his pocket and examine it. On the hasp were carved the initials . . . J. P.

"Now I wonder . . ." murmured Johnny.

"Huh?" queried Jumbo.

"Nothing, mug, nothing at all." Nevertheless Johnny decided to do a little investigating later.

In the morning Snakebite Jackson proved his word was good, and his memory better. He showed up at the hotel in a badly dented, topless, and incredibly noisy flivver ready to instruct Jumbo Getts in the gentle art of applying the Manchurian Choke to the throat of a snorting bovine. There was, he announced, a ranch near by belonging to a friend of his where practice could be enjoyed in peace and quiet.

Johnny said he would be out later. Before the pair left he drew the bulldogger to one side.

"Jackson, who do you know besides Morgan whose initials are J. P.?"

Snakebite scratched his head.

"White or Mex?"

"Mexican."

"Jacinto Prado. Handles the gambling concessions at Rio Rojo, and the betting at Querido's bull ring."

A shadow crossed Johnny's face. "Know anything else about him?"

"Nothin' good." Jackson looked over his shoulder to make sure Jumbo was out of earshot. "He's sweet on Querido's daughter, Serafina."

Johnny smiled. "That's all I wanted to know." He waved Snakebite and

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Jumbo into the latter's perilous gas chariot and watched them start down the road in a series of bucks and jumps.

When they had gone, he thought of visiting Rio Rojo, and hunting up Jacinto Prado. But that might only arouse the mercurial Latin temperament. Instead, he determined to keep his wrestler on the American side of the border. No use taking unnecessary chances.

UP to the day set for the match between Jumbo and his four-footed adversary, Johnny had succeeded in keeping his wrestler away from Rio Rojo, except for one evening when the call of romance and Serafina had proved too strong. And that time Jumbo had returned undamaged except for a certain moonstruck air.

Rio Rojo was making a Roman festival out of the much-touted battle between beast and man in Ramos Querido's bull ring. The arena was decorated with gay bunting, and the local band musicians raced each other through the three numbers in their repertory. The crowd gathered early. Snakebite and Jumbo were in a room beneath the grandstand, near the bull pens, that had been turned over to them for dressing purposes. Johnny stepped into the corridor, heading for Querido's office to settle last minute details. A swarthy figure loomed up ahead of him, blocked his path.

The Mexican, sleek, thin, with closely clipped black sideburns extending halfway down his olive-hued cheeks, introduced himself. "I, *señor,* am Jacinto Prado," he announced with a low, formal bow, a mocking smile on his lips. "Are you not Señor Wayne?"

"Yeah, I'm Johnny Wayne, manager of the Human Landslide," snapped Johnny. "Say, do you happen to be the bird that slung a knife at Jumbo the other night?"

The Mexican stiffened, the veins in his neck tightened. "That, *señor,* was a personal matter. I am here now to talk business."

"Shoot!"

Prado hesitated a moment, then launched forth. Betting on the match between Getts and a bull was heavy in Rio Rojo, with most of the natives generously putting up their money on Jumbo. Prado had already covered a goodly amount of such bets. And to make surer what he originally felt was a sure thing, he had called on Johnny. It was worth a thousand pesos, cash, if Señor Wayne would guarantee victory for the bull.

"Believe it or not," cut in Johnny, "Jumbo wrassles on the level." His gorge was rising at the blunt crookedness of Prado's proposition. It was not the first time Johnny had been approached, nor the first time he had turned down a tempting money offer. Throwing a match went against his New England conscience and sense of fair play to the customers. Added to which, this particular match was crucial in his career as Jumbo's manager. He knew the battle with the bull would prove definitely whether or not Jumbo was actually chicken-hearted.

He moved a step closer to the glowering Mexican.

"Listen, boy friend. Don't go tossing any more knives around carelessly. You're liable to get hurt, savvy? Now beat it!"

Jacinto Prado's dark face turned almost purple. "*Un momentito*—wan moment, *señor.* I want to show you sometheeng." He half led, half pushed Johnny into a near-by stall.

"Who you shovin'?" snapped

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Johnny. He glanced around and saw as fierce a gang of Mexican cutthroats lining the bare wall as he had ever set his astonished eyes on.

"My frien's," said Prado expansively. "And it eez important for us that thee bull ween this match; important for you, too, and that fat cow, Señor Getts. No longer do I make thee generous offer of before. Now thee bull eez victor, or else I am ver' afraid you and Señor Getts weel never see wan more sun to rise in thee east." He thrust his face close to Johnny's. "Onderstand, peeg?"

Johnny was about to remark, 'Nerts,' or some similarly inelegant expression. However, the venom in Prado's black eyes, the menace of the gambler's cold-blooded companions convinced him this was no time for wise-cracking. These men were in deadly earnest. They would be quite as good as their word.

"I weel watch from the arena," went on Prado, with a cunning smile. "You will give Señor Getts his orders, yes?"

Johnny took another glance at the blood-thirsty group. Then he nodded slowly. He knew when he was licked. He knew the extreme pleasure it would give Prado to run a knife-point through Jumbo's thick neck. And now that it was too late, he realized that his encouragement of Jumbo's interest in Serafina had boomeranged disastrously.

However, no sense in both of them risking being murdered for the sake of winning a wrestling match against a bull. Had it been he alone who had been threatened, Johnny might have told Prado to go to blazes, but he drew the line at dragging Jumbo into a mess that might mean his funeral.

With a sorrowful, almost hang-dog look on his face he returned to the dressing room and explained how matters stood.

JUMBO listened, dazed and wide-eyed. He had never heard his manager talk like that before, and he was slow in grasping the purport of Johnny's message.

"But, Johnny," he expostulated, "I can't do that. If I win, Serafina's going to marry me. She promised last night."

"Oh, gosh'" moaned Johnny. He argued two full minutes with Jumbo. But he couldn't shake Jumbo's determination to go out into the arena and do or die for Serafina Clemencia Cortez y Querido.

"Stubborn cuss, ain't he?" offered Snakebite.

Johnny's reply was cut short by the excited arrival of Don Ramos Querido. The bull was ready, he said, the crowd waiting.

Jumbo strode out into the arena, advancing with the slow, solid bulk of a drifting brick barge. He half crouched, arms bent at the elbows, fingers outstretched, and looked around for the bull.

The crowd huzzahed, stamped feet and shouted while a referee in white flannels and green silk shirt waved a flag. A gate dropped and a snorting bull plunged into the ring. The bull tossed its head a few times and stopped, apparently bewildered by the bedlam. Then its tiny eyes caught sight of Jumbo and it charged.

Jumbo heard a shrill voice, Prado's voice, scream encouragement to the beast. "Kill heem, bull!" However, Jumbo never took such remarks seriously. He reasoned that when the customers paid money to see him wrestle they were entitled to have a good time.

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All Jumbo's attention was centered strictly on the bull. He dodged the charge with remarkable agility for one of his ponderous size, grabbed for the horns as the bull sped past, just as he had been taught to do. He missed, slipped and fell.

There were shouts from the crowd. Groans of dismay from those who had put their last peso on Jumbo. Laughs from those with an uncontrollable sense of humor.

The bull wheeled and thundered back, head low and the menacing, sharp-pointed horns directed straight at the scrambling form of Jumbo. The wrestler was breathing hard, but he was a good judge of timing and distance. No chance to get up. He rolled swiftly. The bull's horns just grazed his skin and Jumbo, reverting instinctively to his older wrestling practice, lunged upward with his feet with all his strength as the bull went by. It was a perfect flying kick, catching the animal unexpectedly in the stomach.

The big beast veered away and stood for a moment, winded. Its narrow flanks heaved like great bellows. Hot breath pumped from its distended nostrils.

Jumbo was on his feet in an instant. The next moment he rushed forward, twisting a half-Nelson on the bull's tail. The animal reared and kicked. Jumbo, however, was too close. He caught the hooves on the fleshy part of the thigh, and they did little damage.

The bull bent his head around in a half lunge, and at precisely the correct moment, Jumbo hurled his full two hundred and fifty pounds at the neck and head of the animal. His strong arms found a grip on the pointed horns, and wrenched with all their strength. The surprised animal found itself thrown, kicking, on its back.

The grandstand cheered. Johnny, forgetting himself in his excitement, joined in the yell of exultation. Jumbo was proving to his delighted audience that he was "bravo" . . . that he had nerve. Regardless of past performances, no need now to wonder whether or not Jumbo was "chicken."

Abruptly Johnny checked his shouting voice. "Gosh!" he muttered. "I'm practically rooting for my own murder —and Jumbo's." Yet despite his silence, he knew that in the bottom of his heart he wanted Jumbo to win.

DURING the brief pause, Jumbo's eyes searched the boxes near the railing, and in one of them found those of Serafina, sitting with her father. Jumbo waved to her, and turned to face his four-footed opponent again.

The bull had grown wary. He charged and stopped, uncertain how best to tackle this strange adversary.

Jumbo c r o u c h e d and circled, crouched and c i r c l e d, eager for another fall that would win him the match, and Serafina. His lips were tight pressed in determination. Apparently he did not notice that he was gradually edging back against the stout board fence that marked the limits of the bull ring. If he allowed himself to get trapped there, and the bull made a sudden rush, his position would be highly precarious.

Johnny saw the danger, and shouted a warning. Jumbo paid no attention. He had backed near the box in which sat Jacinto Prado, who scowled as he watched man and bull intently. Jacinto saw the beast start a rush, and at that instant flicked the burning cigar stub that had been in his hand straight at Jumbo's back.

Jumbo felt a burning sensation like

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a bee sting. Instinctively he turned just as the bull charged.

A new warning cry rose from the crowded arena; women screaming hysterically. It seemed inevitable that Jumbo would be impaled against the fence. The thundering hooves seemed to be upon the doomed man, the lowered horns gleamed evilly in the sunlight. Jumbo wheeled and sweat drops broke out on the big man's forehead.

"The fence!" yelled Johnny. "Jump for it!"

But the cry came too late. There was no time for Jumbo to turn and scale that barrier to safety. Instead Jumbo leaped high in the air, hurtling his heavy body over the bull's tossing head. A horn grazed his leg, cutting the flesh deeply as the man clawed frantically for a hand hold in the folds of skin beneath the animal's tawny neck.

The bull dodged his head around to miss the fence, and crashed sideways into the heavy wooden barrier. Jumbo was thrown to the ground by the force of the impact. The bull was stunned.

Jumbo gave him no chance to recover. The spectators gasped at the sheer audacity of the man as he picked himself off the ground and deliberately threw himself at the quivering bull, attempting to pull the animal's legs out from under him. The man was panting hard, apparently unmindful of the wound in his leg. Once the bull tottered, but a moment later it had kicked its legs free, its head was bent again towards its human adversary.

In a desperate effort to turn those deadly horns away from him, Jumbo reached up, one hand grasping a pointed horn, the other searching for a grip on the bull's muzzle. The animal reared and snorted, but Jumbo hung on. He dared not let go. Suddenly, with a final wrench, he threw the plunging animal on its back.

No toreador was ever accorded the acclaim that greeted Jumbo from the grandstand while attendants on horseback rushed out to rope the bull as it attempted to scramble to its feet again. Jumbo walked towards the center of the arena, limping badly, winded, but with the happy light of victory in his eyes. Johnny was one of the first to reach his side. Snakebite dashed out, too, and the pair of them helped the big man to the room that had been set aside for the wrestler's dressing quarters.

Safe inside Johnny locked the door. His joy over Jumbo's success was chastened by somber thoughts of what would happen next:

"Got a gun?" asked Snakebite.

Johnny shook his head.

"I got two," said Snakebite. "Reckon we kin blast our way out, if need be. Anyhow, I bin cravin' to shoot me a Mex a long time now."

"Huh-huh," said Johnny. He was busy with the first aid kit, bandaging the nasty gash in Jumbo's leg.

THERE was a rap on the door. "Who's there?" demanded Johnny apprehensively.

It was Don Ramos Querido, with the winner's share of the purse. Johnny didn't like the cold smile on his face as he left a few moments later.

When Jumbo was dressed Johnny suggested that they go. They could make a dash for the border. Once across it they would be safe. As Johnny flung open the door, Jacinto and his cutthroats rushed in.

"You do not forget our appointment, *señor?*"

Wham! Snakebite's gun blazed once. He fired at the floor.

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"Let's go, pardner!" shouted the Texan.

A knife blade whizzed past Johnny's ear. Guns barked, and acrid powder smoke filled the room and corridor outside. Johnny heard a Mexican scream, saw him fall clutching his side. Snakebite's guns meant business now. Johnny saw Jumbo crack two swarthy heads together with a sickening crunch. The next instant he was being shoved into the corridor. The flash of an upraised knife caught Johnny's eye. His fist crashed into something solid—a Mexican jaw—and he had the satisfaction of seeing his assailant reel back against the wall.

Fists, knives and guns mingled in a bedlam of bloody carnage as the three Americans fought their way inch by inch through the dark corridor.

"This way," shouted Snakebite. "Jumbo can bust a hole in the fence with his shoulder and there's a Texan I know lives about two blocks away in a 'dobe house."

After three tries Jumbo felt the outer arena fence give, and the trio plunged through the gap.

"What are we runnin' for?" panted Johnny. "Why don't we call the cops?"

"Tell you later," called back Snakebite, leading the sprint. Safe inside the home of Jackson's friend, Snakebite explained briefly what had happened. Then he turned to Johnny.

"I killed me a Mex back there and shot up half a dozen. You slugged a couple and Jumbo here just plain squeezed 'em to death. Them is all hangin' offenses in Rio Rojo."

"They started it," protested Johnny.

"Try and prove it," snapped Snakebite. "Anyhow, Prado's cousin is *jefe de la policia,* chief of police, savvy?"

Johnny nodded.

"Better hole up till night," suggested Jackson's friend. "I'll take you down the road a piece in my car, and you can cross the border out of town. Probably a warrant out for the arrest of you hellions right now, if I know Prado. Hungry, boys? Well, how about a little drink?"

"Reckon a mite o' liquor wouldn't do us no harm," said Snakebite. "Produce the bottle Ira."

"I got to see Serafina," muttered Jumbo.

Johnny groaned.

IT was well after dark when Jackson's friend deposited the three fugitives near the end of a dirt road some two miles from Rio Rojo. As his recent guests clambered out of the car they were given instructions. Go up past the next house, then turn right, and a mile across the desert would find them on United States soil, near a road that would take them into town. Snakebite nodded. They shook hands all around and the three men plodded on. There were lights in the house ahead, which seemed to be the hacienda of a wealthy man.

"Better circle 'round that dwelling," suggested Snakebite as they approached the house.

Jumbo's face suddenly lighted up. "I know that place, Johnny. It's Serafina's home."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Johnny.

"Ssh!" warned Snakebite. "There's somebody out in front."

The men detoured behind a screen of bear grass and Spanish bayonet.

"Look, Johnny," said Jumbo, suddenly excited. "There's Serafina, up there in the balcony. She's waiting for me."

"If she is, she's talking to herself."

A few more steps ahead and in the

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gloom all three made out the figure of a man standing beside his horse under a shady ceiba tree beneath Serafina's balcony. The fellow was tall, and thin, and there was no mistaking the voice. It was Jacinto Prado's.

Jumbo and Johnny crept closer and listened.

"That peeg, Jum-bo, was so funny." Serafina's silvery laughter floated across the road. "I would have laughed so much if thee bull had pinned heem to the fence. Bah, the fool thought I would marry heem. But it is only you I love, Jacinto, my dear." She plucked a rose out of her hair and tossed it down to Prado.

Johnny couldn't see the cold glint that suddenly crept into Jumbo's eyes as the big man stepped forward.

"Hey, Dizzy! What are you doing?" he shouted.

The next instant Jumbo was moving swiftly towards Prado. As the Mexican turned, reaching this time for a gun instead of a knife, Jumbo grabbed the gun wrist, snatched the revolver away and with his other hand took a firm grip on Prado's sash.

Johnny and Snakebite watched Jumbo's next move breathlessly.

The big man lifted Prado clear of the ground, hefted him up and down once or twice. Then with a tremendous grunt he threw the squirming Mexican straight up at Serafina on the balcony.

It was a perfect toss. Prado hit the balcony railing with a thud, and hung, a grotesque, kicking, swearing figure draped comically over the wooden grille work.

Jumbo turned and walked back to his companions.

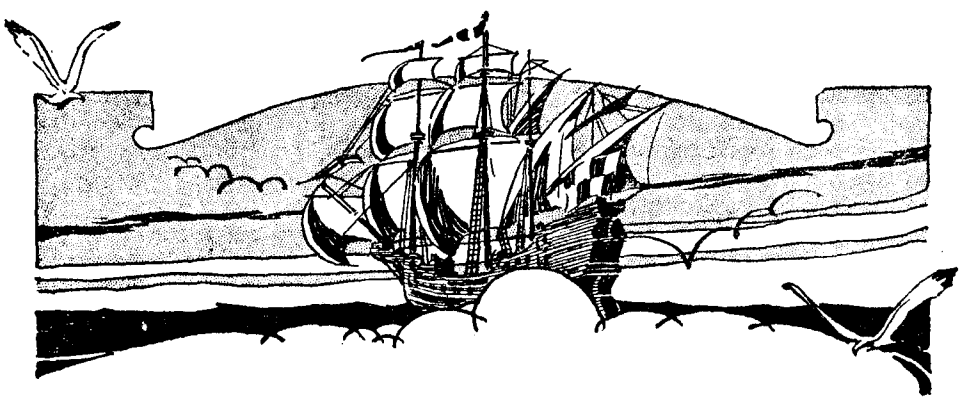
"Let's go," he said. There was a new snap in his voice. "Johnny, when we get back to the States find me a man to wrestle. I'm kind of mad . . . the way things turned out about Serafina, and all."

"Just stay mad, boy friend," snapped Johnny, "and you'll be wearing a jewel-studded championship belt in another year."

"He sure will, but what gets me," put in Snakebite as the three directed their steps towards the border, "is why you didn't pitch the horse up there, too."

"Gee," said Jumbo solemnly, "I never thought of that, Mister Jackson."

THE END.



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Great were the deeds of Red Hawk, white savior of the Cheyennes — yet he could know no peace until he conquered his white enemy

Firelight played over Red Hawk's spellbound listeners

The White Indian

By MAX BRAND

Author of "The Longhorn Feud," "The Masterman," etc.

THE CHARACTERS.

RED HAWK, known as the White Indian, because as a child he had been stolen by the Cheyennes and raised by them. Unwilling to go through with the bloody, disfiguring tortures of the tribal initiation, he became an outcast. Then he took the advice of a white friend and went to the white settlement of Witherell. But he soon found that he was not wanted there, either.

He wandered about for a time, seeking to catch the great White Horse that headed a wild horse herd of the plains. His hope was that by doing so he might redeem himself in the eyes of the Cheyennes—more particularly to offer the animal as a purchase price of the beautiful white woman he had come to know in the town of Witherell. But when he had at last caught and tamed the white stallion, he was only partly reinstated in the affections of the tribe, and he was wholly unsuccessful in buying the white woman.

Discouraged, he thought to leave life on this earth by riding into the fateful Sacred Valley, which had been consecrated to the great spirit whom the Cheyennes called Sweet Medicine. No Indian had ever dared go inside that valley.

Yet once inside, he had no choice but to believe that Sweet Medicine favored him. He was unharmed. The valley was a peaceful place of plenty. He found the yellow grains of gold which white men worshiped. And during what seemed to him a kind of miracle, an an-

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cient, broken arrow with a strange head was given to him. This must surely be a symbol from Sweet Medicine, he thought; and a promise that the Cheyennes would be blessed.

SPOTTED ANTELOPE, Red Hawk's old foster-father.

LAZY WOLF, an easy-going white man who had long made his home with the Cheyennes, and who had always been Red Hawk's firm friend.

BLUE BIRD, Lazy Wolf's daughter by an Indian wife.

STANDING BULL, Red Hawk's most loyal red friend among the Cheyennes.

RUNNING ELK, the Cheyenne medicine man.

DULL HATCHET, the Cheyenne war chief.

WIND WALKER, the great white enemy of the Cheyennes—ever since the day when marauding braves had attacked his home, left his wife dead, and stolen his little son, "Rusty." Wind Walker's other name is SABIN; and neither he nor Red Hawk knows that they are father and son.

RICHARD LESTER, a friendly white lawyer who lives in Witherell.

MAISRY LESTER, his attractive daughter, whose kindly and sympathetic attitude toward the White Indian have forever enslaved that young man's heart.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOME TO HIS PEOPLE.

RED HAWK got his buffalo robe and tied into a corner of it the product of half a day of scraping in the riffles and washing in the brightest sand of the creek. When he had finished, he had twenty pounds of gold, some fine as dust, some in heavy nuggets.

After that, as he followed down the course of the stream to the point where it joined the main river, his eyes searched the sand and gravel everywhere. And everywhere he saw the winking yellow eyes of the treasure. Still he laughed! For was it not fitting that the Indian god should live on the heights, while the god of the white man lay in the mud of the valley below him?

He was hungry, when he had time to think of such a trifle. So with a stone he knocked over a mountain grouse, and then remembered that he had no means of making a fire. However, his hunger could wait.

He went on down the valley in the middle of the afternoon. Two of the buffalo bulls were fighting. Beating the ground, they slashed the turf with their hoofs, throwing the thunder of their bellowing along the face of the earth. They were still bumping their heads together as he passed on into the lower ravine, among the trees, and so through the quiet filled by the hushing sound of the stream until he was near the gates of the valley.

Here he paused for a moment, because his blood turned cold as he recognized out of the distance the monotonous death chant of the Cheyennes. Was it a song sent by Sweet Medicine to warn him from the entrance? Was he to be imprisoned here all the rest of his days?

He stepped out beside the leaning pillar and saw, beyond him, at the edge of the swift water, a full fifty of the warriors of the tribe. They were singing together, and before them all old Spotted Antelope kneeled on the ground in nothing but a breechclout. He was wailing to the god, the song shaking his fat paunch as he raised his time-dwindled arms to the sky. Close behind him was the second group of mourners, composed of Standing Bull and Lazy Wolf. It was not strange that these three should have come—but behind them in a wide semicircle were other braves, and among them no less

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a magnificence than Running Elk, the great medicine man!

They saw Red Hawk at the same time, as he came out with the White Horse behind him; and they broke into a shout that was the sweetest music he ever had listened to in his life. Then they came pouring about him.

But they seemed small to him, and their voices had no meaning. Everything in this outer world was dim and insignificant compared with the marvels inside the valley, where even antelope walked without fear.

A spirit came on Red Hawk. He held up the broken arrow before their eyes and was silent. All the way back to the camp he would not speak, neither to the smiling face of Standing Bull nor to the exulting eyes of old Spotted Antelope, nor to Lazy Wolf, who kept bumping his heels against the side of his mule.

On the way, in spite of his own silence, he learned why the warriors had come. The Blue Bird had repeated the story of how Red Hawk had left the camp to find the face of Sweet Medicine, whereupon it was suddenly revealed to Running Elk that perhaps the heart of the great spirit would be turned from the tribe because of the sad prayers of Red Hawk. Therefore, in the middle of the night he had called on chosen warriors. Only Dull Hatchet had refused to come; the rest had been singing the lament at the mouth of the valley, to pacify Sweet Medicine.

IT was deep night before they reached the camp. The scouts who met them turned back with whoopings that raised the whole village; and Red Hawk, still silent, led the way not to the lodge of his father, but to that central opening among the tepees where the ceremonial fuel was piled high to await a happening sufficient for celebration.

The silence in which he had ridden home had spread by degrees over all who attended him, as though they felt the chilly dread of the marvel even before it was spoken.

Dull murmurs and the movement of feet told him that the circle was now ringed about by many people. In the distance, children cried out in sharp voices, which were hushed suddenly as they drew nearer.

In the meantime, Red Hawk took from Standing Bull flint and steel. Onto a quantity of dry timber he shed the shower of sparks until the flame caught. Now the fire put up a slender waving finger. He pushed the flaming little pile against the great heap, and watched the fire run up the side of the mound until the whole mass was a roaring blaze. Now, as he turned, he saw the firelight over the faces of the throng, the glistening of many eyes.

He stretched his hand into the sky. He began to walk up and down, holding the broken arrow in his hand. Now and then he leaped into the air, and again strode on. Some one began to rumble a drum, softly. A flute screamed out. In the pauses of that music he began his chant.

At the entrance flap of the great lodge that faced south onto the circle, he saw Dull Hatchet standing, gathered into the darkness of a buffalo robe.

"WHO stood in the medicine lodge at the time of the initiation?" cried Red Hawk. "Who stood in the medicine lodge and heard a voice saying: 'Turn from the blood!—Turn from the blood! Go out from this place!'—Who stood in the medicine lodge?"

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A solitary wavering voice cried through the night, in answer, "Red Hawk! He stood there!"

The White Horse, following his master nervously, now paused and stamped, as though to give assent to the words.

The whole throng gathered up the name and sent it booming, strong with the long suspense of speech, "Red Hawk!"

"It was the voice of Sweet Medicine that spoke," said Red Hawk. "Whose spirit did he melt? Whose heart did he soften? Whose feet did he lead from the lodge?"

"Red Hawk!" cried that deep voice of men, that tingling voice of the women and children.

"Far away," chanted Red Hawk, "I see a Cheyenne in the great camp of the whites. He is among their medicine lodges of wood, and for a year he will not utter speech, and he is enslaved to a white and labors more than a squaw. Who is that man I see, whose face grows pale as a bone that has lain all winter in the rains?"

"Red Hawk!" cried the throng.

"I see a man walking on the plains," he chanted. "He follows the trail of the White Horse, from winter to summer; from the prairies to the mountains. For Sweet Medicine leads him on, through snow and over burning ground; starving, thirsting. Now I see him walking away from the mountains, and the White Horse follows him. The White Horse comes to his hand. What man is he?"

"Red Hawk!" shouted the crowd.

The small boys had worked through to the front of the circle, by this time; and as the pauses came and the drums thundered and the people cried out, the little naked boys leaped up and down in the firelight and shouted the response with a voice as shrill as the crowing of roosters.

"He has come to his people again," he chanted. "I see him among the famous Cheyennes, but the hearts of the leaders are blackened; they turn from him.—What man is he?"

"Red Hawk!" came that yelling answer.

The dark form of Dull Hatchet moved a little from in front of his lodge. Old Running Elk, hideous in a buffalo mask, came prancing out from the line and began a dance, moving his head and body up and down like a turkey gobbler that curtsies to his own pride, the while shaking long rattles made of bones.

The heart of Red Hawk swelled at this sight, for he saw that the chief medicine man of the tribe was giving his presence and his credit to the chant. Running Elk was paying homage.

"At the door of the Sacred Valley —at the leaning Pillar—at the entrance to the house of the god—in the path of danger—by the swift, whispering water—what man do I see?" he cried.

"Red Hawk!" they thundered back at him.

"The air is white as milk. It is like the breathing of buffaloes in winter. The trees are as monsters under water; they are as spirits.—Or are they spirits indeed which reach out their hands? For this is the floor of the lodge of Sweet Medicine. This is the Sacred Valley that I see, and a man goes riding through it on a white horse.

"The mist clears. About the man move the sacred buffalo, fearless. The antelope come close to him. The little fawns stretch out their bright, wet muzzles to his hand. The bucks threaten him with their horns. They belong to Sweet Medicine, and they are not afraid. What man is he?"

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"Red Hawk!" shouted a greater chorus than ever.

IN the distance, on the verge of the circle, Red Hawk saw the face of the Blue Bird. For one instant it was like a jewel held in the dark hand of the night. Beyond her, he saw the great buffalo robe slip away from the naked shoulders of Dull Hatchet.

"The magic waters fall from the cliff. They speak from the sky. Their throat is the throat of Sweet Medicine. I see the face of a man wet with their spray. I see him look up, and over his head flies the night-owl, huger than ever an owl was seen before. The bird has vanished. It is no longer in the sky.—Ay, for there is a hole in the rock.—And I see the man walk up the face of the cliff. His feet cling like the feet of a mountain goat to the ledges, and he stands at the black mouth of the cave. What man is he?"

"Red Hawk!" bellowed the throng.

Standing out above the rest, towering even above those tall warriors who encircled the fire, he saw Dull Hatchet wading through the throng. Slowly he came, stretching out an arm before him to make his way.

"I see a man enter the cave of blackness. It is the heart of the mountain where Sweet Medicine found the magicians. It is the dreadful chamber where he found the magic arrows, and which gave fortune to the Cheyennes. It is filled with darkness, but the man walks on. His feet take him forward step after step.—What man is he?"

"Red Hawk! Red Hawk!" they roared.

He began to be frenzied, shouting out as the thundering of the drums died away again:

"Out of the blackness of the cave I see a monster coming. Swifter than the feet of men he is coming. His eyes are two golden moons that fly toward the man. Something is thrust into his hand. He hears a voice that whispers: 'Peace!' He hears a noise of wings. He falls into a darkness of the mind.

"He rises again at last. He comes out to the day. He looks down at his body and sees that it is alive. On his breast the red owl is painted. In his hand there is a token, for him and for all the Cheyennes. It is a magic arrow. It is an arrow out of the old time. It is a medicine arrow to bring happiness to the Cheyennes. And he lifts the arrow. He brings it to his people. He tells them the truth with a single tongue. He holds the arrow before their eyes.—What man is he?"

But the whole circle of the listeners began to crumble as they heard the climax of the adventure. Now there arose a veritable shrieking that sent his own name into his ears in roaring waves.

He saw Spotted Antelope staggering towards him, drunk with joy. He saw Standing Bull leaping like a frantic colt. But most of all the amazed face and the staring eyes of Dull Hatchet, as the war chief strode towards him, still brushing aside the lesser people with his scarred and massive arms. So Red Hawk knew that he had at last come home, indeed, to the heart of his tribe.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BODY OF A GUARD.

THE progressive spirit and the business aggressiveness of Jeremy Bailey and his brother Joe were building Witherell into a trading post that promised to be a great success. Joe Bailey had gone out onto

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the plains and induced the chiefs of the Pawnees to bring in a camp of several hundred lodges, and they now whitened the pass leading down to the town.

Jeremy Bailey, on the other hand, had brought down the creek to the town several big scows loaded down with articles for the Indian trade. Every brave among those Pawnees had his share of skins and furs and buffalo robes which he was prepared to trade for knives, guns, ammunition, colored calico, the blankets which were lighter than buffalo robes could ever be, bright beads, sugar, coffee, tea, iron pots, and the sail canvas which more and more was coming to be used in place of the heavy lodges made of skins.

All of these essentials in the trade were piled along the counters behind the various booths of the Bailey store. There had been three days of entertaining the chiefs and distributing presents to those greedy fellows. Now for two days the market had been opened, and the price had been agreed on at half a pint of sugar for a buffalo robe in good condition, with other things going in about the same proportion. If a white man could not make a profit of several thousand per cent, it was hardly considered worth while to be in the Indian trade.

So far, there was no firewater on tap. On the last day of the trading, a barrel or two of that would be carted out to the Indian camp, and then the braves could get as tipsy as they pleased; but no drunken Indians were wanted reeling around the streets of Witherell. That was why the trading had gone off so smoothly.

On this day, as Jeremy Bailey looked over the proceedings and saw the ponderous heaps of robes unpacked from the backs of the Indian ponies, it seemed to him that the malodorous skins in fact gave off a delicious perfume, and that the opportunities of this kind world were opening before his eyes. A big Pawnee warrior had just made a trade of a magnificent painted robe, a veritable museum piece, in exchange for a small bag of lump sugar, which was a novelty in the market. Now the robe was being folded away with care, while the brave sat down on his heels on the spot and proceeded to eat his sugar piece by piece, with a great and solemn satisfaction.

Such happiness came over Jeremy Bailey's mind that he looked across the room, through the air which was dust-clouded from the handling of the robes, and even smiled when his glance rested on the face of his brother. They did not love one another; they never had. But to-day Jeremy could forgive the world that had harnessed him to a twin. They were necessary to one another; Joe because he was the tactful one who brought in new business, and Jeremy because he had the calculating eye and mind that drives good bargains.

The trading was going on at a fine rate when a little murmur ran among the Pawnees; and in one instant every booth under the big, sprawling awning was deserted. What the whisper had been Jeremy could not tell, but instantly he was ready for a fight. If another trader had showed up to tempt away the Pawnees, there was blood in the eye of Jeremy.

He shrugged his shoulders and strode out of the trading store in time to see a rider come around the next corner and into the central square of the town. He was mounted on a white horse, and behind him streamed out a fan-shaped tail of small boys, all yelling and whooping. The rider himself

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sat in the usual Indian saddle, his feet very high, his back humped forward a good deal, his head bobbing up and down a little with every step of the horse. However, Jeremy Bailey was accustomed to the sight of Indian braves on ponies.

IT was the horse itself that caught the eye of Jeremy, and his face flushed until the scar on it stood out like white paint. Then, as he saw the glint of the sun on the dark red hair of the man, he realized that he knew all about him. That was the famous stallion, and the rider was the white Cheyenne called Red Hawk.

Jeremy Bailey sighed with relief. The grimness went out of his eye, but the greed remained in it as he stared at the horse. That horse would be the extra touch, the little garnishing, which would smooth his way with Maisry Lester. Perhaps it would quicken her affection. It was not that he objected to buying a wife either by cash or influence, for he felt that one must always pay for things worth while, and that affection was only an ornament. Yet if he were to appear astride the White Horse he was sure that the sight would move something in the heart of the girl. It would even stir her father, whose cold, suspicious eyes seemed always to be hunting for the truth, and coming near to the fact that his daughter was marrying in order to provide for her parents.

Jeremy thought of these things, and then permitted himself to admire the way this white Cheyenne rode heedlessly through a crowd of the roach-headed Pawnees, the ancient enemies of his tribe. To be sure, for the moment they were too overcome with astonishment and pleasure at the sight of the horse to be capable of action; moreover, they were bound to leave their weapons behind them when they entered the town. Nevertheless, it seemed to the trader that Red Hawk was most perilously placed.

Yet the white Indian rode straight on, never turning eye to right or left, until he dismounted suddenly before Jeremy. The White Horse began to rub his head against the shoulder of his master, keeping a wary eye on the Indians, who stole closer and closer around them.

"You are Jeremy Bailey," said the newcomer. "My name is Red Hawk, and I have come to make a trade with you."

Jeremy Bailey considered that sun-darkened face and the deep blue stain of the eyes in it. He had the look of one who had suffered; of one who has escaped from a long illness and achieved out of it some sort of spiritual happiness. For a man who had built up such a name, he was small; he was not above middle height, and rather slenderly made. Bulk of thews and sinews always seemed a necessity to big Jeremy Bailey.

"You've got no robes with you that I can see," said Jeremy. "But if you want to trade in the horse, we might talk business."

"Trade in the horse?" asked the white Cheyenne.

He turned his head and smiled at the great stallion. He put out his hand and twisted his fingers into the forelock of the big horse while he answered, absently:

"I have something else to trade with you."

He took a pouch that was slung from his shoulder, opened the mouth of it, and took out something which Bailey could not see until the cold, small weight of it was laid in his hand. Then

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he saw the sheen of gold, and his fingers furled instantly over the nugget.

"In the name of God!" said Jeremy.

"True," said the white Cheyenne, calmly. "I have brought you your god.—There is a great deal more of him. This bag is full, and that is why I want to trade."

"More of him! You know a place where you can get more of this?" asked Bailey.

"I know a place where the sands of a creek are yellow with it," said Red Hawk. "But you could not go there. No white man; no red man can go there. None except Red Hawk."

"Why not?" asked Bailey.

"Because there is bad medicine there for other men."

"Medicine be damned! Where—?"

He checked himself and swallowed. He looked down at the ground and hoped that the lust had not burned too brightly in his eyes.

"Come with me!" said Jeremy Bailey. "We'll go inside."

"Outside," answered Red Hawk. "The horse must stay with me. If we went inside, he would beat down the wall to come after me."

SO Bailey took him around to the rear of the store, where no wind stirred, and where the heat brought out the sweat instantly, covering the face with ten thousand small, shining beads.

"Is that bag full of the stuff?" Jeremy Bailey demanded sharply.

"Yes."

"How long did it take you to wash it out?"

"Most of it I picked out of the riffles on the face of the rock," said Red Hawk. "The rest I washed out of the gravel with my hands. It took me half a day."

Jeremy Bailey lifted the bag. This man, with his ignorant hands, had taken out of the ground five or six thousand dollars in half a day!

At last Jeremy Bailey looked up. His voice came out with a surprising roundness and evenness, so that he rejoiced in the strength of his mind.

"And what do you want me to give you for this?—How much calico and how many knives do you want?" asked Jeremy.

"Calico and knives?" repeated Red Hawk contemptuously. "I bring you the body of your god. I give it into your hands.—And you want to trade me knives and dyed cloth!"

Bailey flushed. "Well, then?" he asked.

"I want your woman," said Red Hawk, simply.

Bailey stared at him, shaking his head without comprehension.

"The woman who is to be your squaw in a little time," Red Hawk continued. "I will give you the body of your god for your woman."

"You damned—!" began Jeremy Bailey.

Then it occurred to him that this was no time to be righteously indignant, when he was standing with his hand on the very Wishing Gate itself. Besides, they were alone. No eyes could see them. Above all, Indians think it no shame to buy and sell their women. Jeremy's own shame thereupon leaked swiftly out of his soul. At once he was freed from the heat and the weight of it.

"Well," said he, "the girl I'm to marry is what you mean?—Maisry Lester?"

"I give you all the god that is in this sack," answered Red Hawk.

Bailey shook his head. "Not for this. But if you'll take me to the place

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where the gold is—that's another matter, Red Hawk. We might arrange something then. We could do business together there, my friend!"

"Very well," answered Red Hawk, smiling. "I knew that you would be willing. Let us go to the woman, at once; then you can tell her that I am buying her away from you."

"Hold on!" said the trader. "I can't give her away, perhaps. I can't deliver her to you, I don't suppose.—I don't know. I'll have to have a chance to think over what can be arranged. Don't hurry me, Red Hawk. Let me think. I'll satisfy you, one way or another. But I can't simply walk up to her and tell her that she's been traded to another man."

"Can you not tell her that you take your hands from her and make her free?"

"Yes," said Bailey. "Of course I could do that.—But what—?"

"That is all I ask," said Red Hawk. "Come—and we'll go quickly to her."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PURCHASE PRICE.

IN every respect, Jeremy Bailey was a practical man, but now he hesitated for a moment with his head bowed, his face reddening, his glance going up under his brows at Red Hawk. This was the moment when his twin brother, Joe Bailey, stepped around the corner of the building and said, smiling:

"Why not, Jerry? A woman can't say anything as heavy as gold."

Jeremy, staring at his brother, understood suddenly that his conversation with Red Hawk had been overheard. He began to walk towards Joe, taking short steps.

"What's the good of trying to murder me, Jerry?" asked Joe, calmly. "You'd be hanged before you had a chance to collect the loot and enjoy it. Don't be a fool! I'm in on this deal, but I'll be worth my salt before the finish. You'll find that out. I've always been worth my salt to you."

"So you're declaring yourself in on this, are you?" demanded Jeremy. "I pay blood for a chance at the gold mine; and you pay nothing but ten minutes of your damned time spying on me.—And you declare yourself in on it!"

"Take it easy," advised Joe. "Suppose I tell the other men in town that Red Hawk has brought in a sack of gold that he washed out, with his own hands in a half day. Well, after that, what chance will you have, to get away and find the mine? You'd be watched night and day. There'd never be a minute when the people here in Witherell wouldn't have their horses saddled and ready for the start. Think it over, Jeremy. You'll need a partner, anyway.—This isn't the matter of a small haul. There's millions in this, maybe!"

"Shut up, you fool!" exclaimed Jeremy, looking askance at Red Hawk.

But the latter merely said, quietly, "All the sands of the creek are shining with your god. You can pick him by the mule load—"

A frantic signal for silence ended this promising speech.

"Take him over and have a chat with Maisry," Joe went on. "She'll understand. She's not a fool. She knows that business is business." And he began to laugh, nodding his head at his brother.

Jeremy Bailey cursed, softly, profoundly. At last he snapped his fingers and remarked:

"It has to be done, I suppose. Look

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here, Red Hawk, what the devil fixes your eyes on that girl? Even if I back out of the picture, you probably can't have her. She's more likely to take up with a fellow of her own kind; some one raised in her own way, I mean. You can pick up a hundred good squaws.—I'll load down ten horses for you with stuff out of the store, and with any one load of that, you'll be able to buy for yourself the prettiest girl among the Cheyennes. Doesn't that sound good to you?"

Red Hawk listened gravely until the speech was finished. Then he placed his hand on the neck of the stallion.

"For two years," he said, "I hunted the White Horse to please her. Why do you talk to me about blankets and knives and ammunition and sugar, when I am thinking of the girl herself?"

"You see?" said Joe to his brother. "And what's the difference? You can blush five minutes, and be rich the rest of your life!"

"May you rot in hell!" said Jeremy softly, and waving to Red Hawk to follow him, he walked off at a brisk pace while Joe remained behind, rubbing his knuckles across his chin.

After an instant, however, Joe decided to join the others, and set off after them with long strides.

THEY went across the back fences, the brothers slipping between the bars and Red Hawk vaulting the barriers with the White Horse. So they came to the rear of Lester's house, and saw his daughter irrigating a vegetable patch. From the windmill water ran in a small ditch along the side of the plot, and with a wide-bladed hoe she dammed or opened the way for the stream.

The girl looked toward them silently; at Red Hawk, first, and finally at Jeremy Bailey. Jeremy said:

"Maisry, every man has his price. Red Hawk has found mine. If I back down and keep away from you, he'll give me a fortune. Just how he'll give it I can't tell you. But the price is too high for me. You can call me a hound if you like. In a way, I suppose I am. But I'm putting the cards on the table. You never gave a rap about me, and so now I'm pulling out."

He stopped. Red Hawk could hear his loud breathing.

The girl had on old leather gloves that had once belonged to her father, and which were now torn and blackened by the garden work. She took off one of those gloves so that with her bare fingers she could arrange her hair, pushing a loose, bright strand into the shimmering mass.

"Why, Jeremy," she said placidly, "the people who make bargains ought always to be free to break them, I suppose.—It's quite all right."

"About your father," said Jeremy, huskily. "I want to say that I still intend to help you to—"

She had not even lifted her hand, but her quiet eyes stopped him, and Red Hawk was filled with wonder.

"Go and saddle your horses," Red Hawk said to Jeremy. "When you come past the front of the house, I shall be ready."

"I wanted to say," said Jeremy to the girl, his face bright with sweat, "that if—"

"Come along, Jeremy!" commanded his brother. "Don't be making a fool of yourself.—It's over, now. Come along with me!"

He took Jeremy's arm in his hand and pulled him away, and Jeremy's face was red and polished as if it had been mahogany.

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Red Hawk's heart drank of joy in much the same way that the thirsty soil drank up the water which the girl gave to it.

He was smiling as he looked up at the girl; then his smile went out. She was not stern; rather, infinitely quiet. Time went on like a sailing bird; time, which cannot pause except at the end of life, seemed to have halted utterly for her.

AT this moment it was possible to look at her more closely than he ever had observed her before, so that he was able to see without the consciousness of being seen.

She was by no means beautiful, as perfect things are beautiful. The skin was pinched a little between her eyes and at their corners, and the upper lip was pressed down firmly upon the lower, as though she had learned how to endure. The pain that was now in her face did not appear to be a stranger there; and pain can never be beautiful. Red Hawk knew, suddenly, that he was seeing her not only as she was at that moment, but also by a clear foreshadowing as she would appear in a future time, when by the years her features are altered to pulp and bone. Yet this foreglimpse, this prefiguring, did not alarm him. He was only bent on learning what it was that occupied her; a thing as near as himself, yet as distant as unseen mountains. He was half tempted to turn and glance over his shoulder, but he knew that her look was inward.

Out of that moment of quiet she said to him, "So you have bought me, Red Hawk?"

"How can I buy you?" he asked her. "I can tie a hundred horses to the poles in front of your father's lodge; but if you will not have me, and if he will not give you to me, still you are not mine. However, I have showed Jeremy Bailey the body of his god, and I am going to take him where he can get the rest of it. What I showed to him I can also give to you. If your god is strong, perhaps there is enough of him here in this bag to take care of your father and mother. If not, perhaps I can bring more."

Unslinging the bag from his shoulder, he poured the contents suddenly on the ground before her feet. Some of the nuggets jumped away and sank out of sight in the soft, liquid mud of the vegetable patch. Others lay half buried, half dimmed by the dust.

As he straightened he was surprised to see that she was not looking at the gold, but into his face; she was smiling as women smile at a child.

"My father is a proud man," said the girl. "What do you think he will say when I show him this and say it is offered for me?"

"He will say," said Red Hawk, instantly, "that first I brought the White Horse and then I brought gold, and that after that there is something greater, which is a need that I have of you. For the knife that fits the hand is not thrown away, even when it is old and almost worn away by grinding. That is how you fit into my mind. When I think of having you with me, of being able to give you my thoughts freely, in the palm of my hand, it is as though clothes were put upon me to cover my nakedness.—But I could never buy you. I could not buy the White Horse, either; but each of us belongs to the other, and cannot be put out of mind."

To this she made an answer that seemed to him evasive, though she no longer smiled at him. She began to move her eyes by pauses over his face.

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"You were sick when you were last in Witherell," she said. "Your face was all bones and sorrow, but now you are happier. You look younger, and you look able to laugh. Why is that? Is there something in the wild story that has drifted into the town about the white Cheyenne who went to the Sacred Valley and saw Sweet Medicine, and brought back a sacred arrow to his tribe?"

She was smiling again, but there was a poison of whimsical mockery in the smile.

Very troubled, he said, "That is true."

"True?" she exclaimed. "True that you saw Sweet Medicine—and that he gave you a sacred arrow with his own hand? I'd like to hear about it."

IN that moment she had withdrawn to a great distance from him. He put out his hand, but saw that no physical effort could draw her back to him. He said, simply:

"Yes, it is true. I alone, with the White Horse, entered the Sacred Valley. I went beyond the leaning pillar which no Indian had ever passed. I went on through the herds of buffalo and of antelope which had no fear; even the fawns nibbled at my hand. It was the dawn of the day. And I came close up to the feet of the speaking waters. I looked up and saw the owl of Sweet Medicine fly into a cave far up the rock. I climbed up the cliff and stood before the dark of the cave."

"Were you terribly afraid?" she asked him.

He sighed, answering, "If we are to know one another, we must have the whole truth. Yes, I was terribly afraid. I was so afraid that my knees shuddered; my brain turned; my belly was sick; and every breath I drew froze my heart. Only my feet carried me inside, and there in the darkness I saw the two golden eyes of Sweet Medicine. I fell on my face, and heard the rushing of his robes over my head, and a whisper that said, 'Peace!' When I stood up, I found that in my hand there was a broken arrow, very ancient. No man has seen an arrowhead chipped like the one I found in the cave of Sweet Medicine."

"Do you think it might not have been Sweet Medicine, but only an owl that you frightened out of its cave?" she asked him.

He smiled at her, for he could see that she was coming back to him swiftly; that she was drawing very near again.

"Let me tell you this," said Red Hawk. "Every tribe on the plains sees different spirits. The Pawnees see a Corn Mother. The Sioux see other Listeners under the ground and above. Perhaps the gods take many shapes, and if a white man had been able to see in that darkness of the cave he would have said that the rustling of the robe was only the wings of a bird beating the air and that the golden moons were the eyes of an owl. I cannot tell. To the Cheyennes, it was Sweet Medicine, and the great spirit will grant us good fortune because of the broken arrow.—But what will you say to me, Maisry? I am not trying to buy words of you with the yellow god of the white man. What will you say to me?"

"First," she said, "take up the gold. It is yours. My father will not accept it, and neither may I."

"If it is not good for you, it is not good for me. Let it sink in the mud, therefore," said he.

She looked down from his face, suddenly, as though she were seeing the

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glimmering little pile of metal for the first time.

"Will you give me a little more time?" she said, anxiously. "If I were free, I would follow you this moment.—Do you believe me?"

"Your lips have said it. Therefore, it is true," said Red Hawk. "I knew that this would be true, because the strength of Sweet Medicine came with me all the way across the plains. Therefore, I have been sure of happiness. I must go away now. From now until the moon is full and has worn away again to the first quarter, I shall be busy. At the end of that time I shall come again."

"What is it you wish to do in all that time?" she asked.

"I have promised to show Jeremy Bailey where the yellow body of the white man's god lies," he said, "and then I return."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A GOD PUNISHES.

WHEN Red Hawk saw the Bailey brothers coming up the street a moment later and sent the White Horse vaulting over the fences to meet them, he halted them and the string of pack mules which had been prepared so quickly for the two traders. Then he rode down to the square and halted at each corner of it.

"Friends of Wind Walker, tell him that between the full of the moon and the half, Dull Hatchet and Standing Bull and Red Hawk shall hunt for him among the Witherell Hills, between the peak with two summits and the white hill. Let him come, and bring two friends with strong hands, because three Cheyennes will be waiting for him."

Four times he called that speech, from the four corners of the square. Then he turned and smiled as he found the eyes of the many clinging to him, following him—and most of all huge Sam Calkins, who stood in front of his shop, all soot and shimmering sweat. For how could all of these people know that in fact there was little or no danger to the Cheyennes in the battle to come, since Sweet Medicine had given to the tribe freshly favoring good fortune?

Once they were started, the mules reached across the plains in long marches, for mules take short steps, but they are never tired. There were six of those mules, besides the riding horses of the Bailey brothers; and every one of the mules, they said, would be loaded with the yellow god before they turned back to the towns of men. They talked as though they could pack heaven on the backs of the six mules.

"We'll pack half a million!" said Jeremy to Joe.

Red Hawk, listening indifferently, said to them, "I am your guide and not your guard. You know that the Sacred Valley has been entered by only one man. I am that man.—Are you not foolish, then, to enter the valley? Are you not foolish to go past the leaning pillar?"

They laughed at him.

"How will Sweet Medicine hit us, Red Hawk?" they asked him. "With thunder and lightning?"

They kept on laughing while he watched them with calm, incurious disgust, as though they were walking deaths.

Yet he went first, when they came to the leaning pillar at the entrance to the Sacred Valley, and they followed, with their rifles prepared, looking cautiously

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from side to side. Blind fools who thought that they could see a god, as it seemed to Red Hawk.

He was amazed when, looking back, he saw that they had safely passed the pillar. He had been sure that they would die on the threshold of this holy place. However, who can determine the mind or predict the ways of the spirits?

These two men now hurried on with stony faces, as though fate already had entered them. They passed the thunder of the waterfall, speaking magic with deep tones, and in a short time they were entering the narrow upper ravine where the gold had been found.

The Sacred Valley seemed to have shrunk in size since Red Hawk had first come there. But what may not a god do in his own dwelling?

THEY were halfway up the stream when Joe Bailey screamed out an unintelligible word. With pain, but not with surprise, Red Hawk looked back, expecting to see that Sweet Medicine had already struck and that the man would be lying dead on the ground. Instead, he was on his knees, scooping sand and gravel up from the shallow bottom of the creek, and letting it drip out of his fingers. Showing his yellow-gilded palms to his brother, they laughed and shrieked. Then Joe hurled the first gold he had washed far away into the grass. He was mad, Red Hawk concluded. Sweet Medicine was touching the mind of the white men before he touched their bodies!

Jeremy was in the water, too, now. Then the pair of them were out and at one of the mule packs, tearing it apart and feverishly bringing out the shovels and wooden cradles for washing the gravel. They laid down buckskin sacks. Without pausing to remove more than that one pack, they worked on wildly all the rest of that day.

Truly it was wonderful to see how the stream turned yellow and black; and when they trenched into the sod beside the stream, they washed out portions of the deeply underlying stratum of sand, and this was as rich as the creek bed itself.

For some time Red Hawk watched them. They were already soaked to the skin, and their voices were already hoarse from shouting. They had become grimly patient now, but their eyes were like the eyes of hungry beasts. He felt that he could endure the sight of them no more.

He looked up to the blue peace of the sky, and saw a single white cloud floating and melting in it. Perhaps that was Sweet Medicine, watching and smiling at these fools who thought that they could invade his house without punishment.—Let not the blow that involved the pair strike on the faithful heart of a white Cheyenne!

Finally he set about unpacking. When the mules had been hobbled to graze, he built an open fireplace of rocks, cementing them together with mixed mud and long grass. Then he put up the shelter tent made of thick sail cloth, strong and light, cutting a good center-pole and pegging down the flaps. He felled a quantity of branches out of which he built three soft, deep beds, for he would remain with them that one night, if indeed Sweet Medicine held his hand so long.

Then he took a rifle and went out to hunt. He passed a group of black-tailed deer almost at once, but he could not murder creatures which looked at him without fear. Luck, in the late afternoon, gave him sight of a moun-

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tain sheep that stood on the verge of a cliff, facing the brightness in the west. He tumbled it to the valley floor with a bullet through the head, and took off as much of the best meat as he could carry.

That burden he brought back to the camp which he had pitched beneath the spread of a mighty tree, and found that the Bailey brothers had glutted their first hunger for gold and now lay with their backs against the trunk of a tree, smoking.

THE sun was out of sight behind the western heights, but it was not yet down. All the upper sky was brilliant with the pure light as Red Hawk put down the fresh meat and called to the brothers:

"Here is something to put in hungry bellies. Make your coffee as you choose to make it, while I roast some of this on spits."

They said nothing in reply. They looked at one another in silence, as though each was too tired to fall to any sort of work, even for the sake of hunger. In the meantime, Red Hawk busied himself in the kindling of the fire, the cutting up of the meat in small gobbets that would fit on some long splinters of wood that he had prepared. He was intent on this work, blessing his appetite with the promise that meat would soon be between his teeth.

All at once he heard one of the brothers come up behind him, dragging a rope that made a whispering sound in the grass. He did not even look aside as he said:

"That noise is like a snake coming, friend!"

Something cut the air over his head with a whispering sound. The noose of the rope fell over his body and jerked tight. He was flung on his back, with his arms pinned against his sides and bound fast below the elbows. Above him appeared the scarred face of Jeremy Bailey.

"Easy, Joe, eh?" said he.

"It don't take a man to handle a blind fool like him," said Joe Bailey.

Red Hawk lay still and looked at the sky. His mind was clear. He felt the damp cool of the turf seeping through his deerskin shirt at the hips and the shoulders.

Joe Bailey stood by and kicked him heavily in the ribs. "What does Sweet Medicine say about this, you half wit?" he asked.

"Get that other rope and we'll tie him hard," said Jeremy.

"Why not bash him over the head now and have done with it?" asked Joe.

"Because I want to talk to him for a minute. I want to tell him a few things about his Sweet Medicine. Yeah, *sweet* medicine it's going to be for you, Red Hawk!"

Red Hawk made no effort to struggle. They had revolvers at their hips, and knives in their belts; and they could cut him to pieces before he moved twice. More than that, this was the very floor of the house of the god —his voice spoke yonder and seemed to fill the sky. Therefore it was plain that all things were in his hands and that nothing could happen here except of his will.

IN the meantime, he was tied hand and foot. Jeremy Bailey took him by the hair of the head, with one hand, and dragged him until his shoulders were propped against the trunk of the tree. Then the two brothers filled pipes and sat down cross-legged before him. They blew the smoke toward his face.

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He merely said, "Why do you want to kill me? People kill men they hate or men they're afraid of. Why do you hate me, or why do you fear me?"

"Tell him, Jeremy," said Joe. "I hate to talk to the damned Cheyenne! I'd rather take and smash in his head for him and have it finished. You tell him why, will you?"

"Did you think, you poor idiot," said Jeremy, smiling into the eyes of Red Hawk, "that we'd let you get away from here to sell the news about this placer strike to somebody else?—Look yonder!" He pointed. "You see those two little snaky-looking buckskin sacks?" he demanded.

"I see them," said Red Hawk.

"There's about twenty-five pounds of dust in each of 'em," explained Jeremy. "We've washed around twelve thousand dollars' worth of gold—in a part of one day.—Hell, we've taken out of the ground in one day more than we've worked for all the other years of our lives! And you think that we'd let you walk free out of here to tell other people?"

"I understand," said Red Hawk.

"Good!" said Jeremy. "Then you understand one reason why you've got to be shut up for good and all.—There's other reasons of my own. I'll tell you the best of 'em. I didn't like the way Maisry looked at you the other day. She sort of rested her eyes on you as if you were a nice spot to see. She looked at you, and seemed to forget that I was on the face of the earth. Understand? It made me a little sick to see a white girl look like that at a damned Cheyenne! It made me a little sick at the stomach.

"Well, that's another good reason why you're going to die. It's your face that's harming you, brother. It's that handsome mug you wear that's giving you trouble. It's those big blue eyes and the nice cut of your map that's hurting you under the fifth rib!"

He laughed again, sprawling at his ease and smoking his pipe.

Joe got up and stretched himself. "We'd better get it over with," he said, and pulled out a revolver.

"Wait a minute!" said Jeremy. "I want to talk to the fool for another minute. I want to ask him how much faith he has in his damned red god, just now.—What's Sweet Medicine going to do for you, Red Hawk? Eh? You're the brave boy who got the sacred arrow out of the sacred cave, in the sacred mountain of the sacred valley. Eh? And what's the god going to do for the sacred Red Hawk who managed all of these sacred things? You tell me, will you?"

"Yeah," sneered Joe. "How scared are you?"

RED HAWK looked up at the sky through the wide design which the branches spread against the color. The sun was down; red and gold mounted in deepening waves out of the west and flooded the zenith, spreading out and giving more light and less warmth of the staining dyes. It was not exactly fear that he felt, rather a holy awe. He said:

"I am not afraid. I am only excited. I am excited as people are when they have a bet on a horse race and the horses are standing ready at the start."

"And a damned long race you're gonna run, in a couple of seconds," commented Jeremy. "So you ain't scared?—You're only excited, eh?"

"You have guns," said Red Hawk. "And with a touch of your fingers you may send me death. But Sweet Medicine is swifter and stranger by far.

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That is why I am excited, because I wait to see how he will touch you before my eyes."

"Now tell me something," said Jeremy, taking out a revolver and resting the barrel of it across his knee. "Before I sink a slug in you and then go to roast the meat that you hunted for us—when the bullet goes home and you get the bellyache, are you going to admit that Sweet Medicine is no god at all? Are you going to admit he's just a plain damned owl that you happened to run into?"

Red Hawk frowned with profound consideration. "I do not think so," he said. "Am I to understand the mind of a spirit? Perhaps he will let me die because I have allowed two white men to come into the Sacred Valley. That I cannot tell. Afterwards, he will strike you."

"Will he?" said Jeremy. "It kind of makes me mad, Joe, to hear the way the fool sticks to his story. It kind of makes me mad to think that's the way he'll be thinking when he passes out and turns cold.—He won't have any horrors. He'll still feel that he's in the hand of his god. It sort of takes the satisfaction out of lifting his hair, doesn't it?"

"Yes—it does," admitted Joe, in a strained voice. "It does—sort of."

He had been standing rigid behind his brother, his head straining back, his lower jaw thrust out, his eyes staring down under their lids. With the last words he spoke, the revolver in his hand lifted. Leaning, he fired straight down into Jeremy's back.

Jeremy fell on his face and gripped the grass with both hands. Joe fired into him again.

It seemed almost as though the impact of the bullet had caused Jeremy to rebound from the soil, for as his body flopped clumsily over, Red Hawk saw the gleam of a gun in his hand, too.

Joe stood back, half crouched, his left hand spread stiffly against the air, his mouth pressed up. "Damn you!" he yelled, as he saw the gun, and fired again.

Red Hawk could see the impact of that shot, the shudder that it sent through Jeremy's body; but there seemed to be no killing him. His own bullet he sent home with a much better aim, for he planted it fairly between Joe's eyes so that the dead man fell across the dying.

"The dirty damned skunk! The dirty skunk!" gasped Jeremy.

He writhed his legs together, stretched them out, and lay still . . .

CHAPTER XXX.

GOOD-BYES.

RED HAWK got to the dead men. He could not reach his own knife with his hands, but he was able to pull out that of Joe. With it he sawed clumsily until he managed to sever the ropes and free himself. Then he sat in the darkening sunset and smoked a pipe to Sweet Medicine. What he felt was not gratitude, but a pure and calm devotion.

Under the stars, under the moon, Red Hawk cut the sod and deepened the grave until it would hold them both, for they must not be allowed to pollute the floor of the house of Sweet Medicine. Then he took their weapons, their wallets, all that was in their pockets, and put the stuff in a saddle bag. When he had finished that, he lay down and slept until the sun was up.

The valley was in perfect peace when he rose. There was no sign of what

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had happened except the flat, fresh earth of the grave and the torn up turf where the bank of the creek had been trenched by the shovels of the brothers. These were small wounds, and the rains would touch all into shape again and heal the wounds.

He took the saddle horses and the string of mules on the lead of a rawhide lariat. They pulled out in an awkward line behind him as he rode down the valley until he was in full face of the shining waterfall. There he dismounted and fell on his face in the grass before the bright face and the deep voice of his god. Afterwards he continued slowly down the valley.

It was slow work to bring that train of mules across the hills; it was, in fact, well into the afternoon before he came to the Cheyenne outposts again. What a thing it was to sit his horse on the great hill that overlooked the camp and look down upon the tepees with the knowledge that he was no longer an outcast, but a hero and a maker of mighty medicine to all his tribe. It made affection rush out from him with a great flow. It made him smile, and at the same time there were tears in his eyes.

THE scouts saw him as he rode down into the hollow circle of the plain. They did not need to be close in order to see that it was the master of the White Horse who approached the camp. And how they came! Screeching like fiends, and holding their lances above their heads so that the feather streamers stood out stiffly.

The small boys, who would always be skirmishing from dawn to dark on horseback, poured next, in a horde. They made a whirlpool of which the returning procession was the vortex. They kept shouting his name; they kept coining new names. That was their way. When a man has done a great deed, his tribe will shower many epithets upon him and from them all he may take those which he chooses. "Arrow-bringer" they called him, and "Mighty Owl" and "Eyes in Darkness."

He listened to the uproar without smiling, though his heart was smiling, be sure. Then he saw White Wolf among the rest. He was the brave who had charge of the outposts on this day; a warrior of note, young as he was. His eyes gleamed with pleasure when this great man, this friend of Sweet Medicine, lifted a hand and summoned him. And as he rode beside the white Cheyenne, White Wolf said:

"Did you strike the white men? I see horses for two. Were there two? I see no scalps, and that is why I ask you!"

Red Hawk paused for a moment. He had not so much as thought of the thing before. For surely he might have counted coup upon the dead, and taken their scalps.

But now he merely said, "It was not I, but Sweet Medicine who killed them. I did not have to lift my hand. Sweet Medicine struck them down by their own hands, when they were about to kill me. I was tied with ropes. I was helpless when Sweet Medicine struck them."

White Wolf gaped. What is to be said of heroes and heroism, compared with the mystery that surrounds a wonder-worker?

"Since it is the work of Sweet Medicine," said Red Hawk, "the mules, the horses, and everything on them must be returned safely to the whites. I did not win the prizes. Keep them safely for me, White Wolf. Do not let any

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of the young men or the boys open the packs and steal from them."

At this the warrior laughed a little.

"Do you think that there are fools in the Cheyenne camp?" he asked. "Would not the young men sooner put their hands into fire than touch what is owned by Red Hawk? But it is time that you came back to the camp, because there is need of the strongest medicine that you can make. Spotted Antelope, your father, cannot eat food. He has a fever. Running Elk has done many things, but still your father's face is hot and his hand is dry. Standing Bull and his squaw stay with Spotted Antelope, but now he is talking while his eyes are open and his brain is asleep. It is well that you have come!"

That was the news which brought Red Hawk sweeping into the camp. Before the Cheyennes had fairly heard the news of his coming, he was at the lodge of his father.

Bending Willow sat on one side of the old man, the Blue Bird was on the other, and Standing Bull burned sweet grass and offering up prayers, patiently. All three gave a silent greeting to Red Hawk as he kneeled by the old man; the women withdrew to the farther side of the lodge. Standing Bull murmured:

"Running Elk has been here and has gone again, shaking his head.—Quickly, brother! It will take a strong medicine to save him. He raves of you and Wind Walker, or Wind Walker and you! Quickly, Red Hawk, because already his breath seems to be rattling in his throat!"

BUT Red Hawk shook his head. The time was too patently upon Spotted Antelope. The long fasting had wasted away his face, and the gray dust of death was already upon it. His withered neck was hardly larger than a man's wrist; at the base of it the bones stood up in two big knobs. One could sorrow for the death of Spotted Antelope, but it seemed impious to wish life back into that worn skeleton. It was only wonderful that breath could still be in him.

But when Red Hawk spoke, the eyes of Spotted Antelope opened and were without the red mist of fever. For that moment his brain was clear.

From under his robe he put out a scrawny hand of ice and laid it, shuddering, in the grip of his foster-son.

"So!" he said. "So! All will be well!" and he closed his eyes with such a smile that Red Hawk thought the ancient brave had hopes of living. But in fact he was only gathering thought and strength for his next words, which he muttered as he opened his eyes again, saying: "My son, between you and Wind Walker let there be peace!"

"There can be no peace with him," said Red Hawk.

"For twenty years," said Spotted Antelope, "I have seen the thing happen, and my son in the hands of Wind Walker. It must not be!"

"Have no fear," said Red Hawk. "Sweet Medicine is close to me. I cannot come to harm."

"But if you injure him you will come to harm," gasped Spotted Antelope. "It is better for you to die than to kill him."

"Kill him?" said Red Hawk, bewildered. "What dream have you had, father? But there is fever in you. You are very tired. Now close your eyes and sleep, while I sit here beside you and pray to Sweet Medicine—"

"When I close my eyes, I shall be dead!" said Spotted Antelope.

In his excitement, he thrust himself

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up on one elbow and grasped at Red Hawk's deerskin jacket with his other hand. The immense effort made him waver. His head fell back on one shoulder, the eyes rolling horribly. He seemed in the very act of expiring as he gasped out:

"If you kill him, your ghost will never find rest after death. Better for a brave to lose his shield and his medicine bag and his scalp than for you to kill him.—Do you hear me? He is—"

The strength went out of him suddenly. Red Hawk was barely in time to catch the body that spilled inert into his arms. But there was a last tremor of the lips, and the breath of a dying man is sacred. Red Hawk put his ear close to hear the final word, but all that he could make out was a thin murmur that sounded in his ear like "Father—father—" several times repeated.

There was no struggle. Spotted Antelope simply caught his breath, and then breathed no more.

EAST of the camp there was a hill on which stood a tree. The hill was like a buffalo lying down, and in the tree that stood on top of it, Red Hawk had the burial platform built.

He saw to everything. Bending Willow and the Blue Bird did the work of wrapping the body, but he had laid out the articles which were to go with the corpse—things of such value that sometimes the dark eyes of the two women stole toward him with a question before they enclosed another treasure in the great bundle. For there were two pipes of the red pipestone, one of them so curiously carved that it was considered a tribal treasure. There was a fine bundle of arrows in a cougar-skin case, a new rifle, ammunition, a pair of fine axes, no less than half a dozen knives, a hatchet, the medicine bag, and Spotted Antelope's shield and lance. A flute, a rattle, a buffalo mask, a necklace of the claws of a grizzly bear were added. Then, in five buffalo robes with a valuable painted robe next to the body, the corpse was wrapped. The body was taken outside and lashed on a travois which was pulled away by the best horse in the old man's herd, a fine little steel-dust stallion.

The platform in the tree had already been built. It was hard to lift the clumsy bundle up to it, but finally the thing was done. Then Red Hawk saw that the saddle and bridle on the stallion were the best that could be found, and finally he ended the ceremony by shooting the horse through the head. It fell not on its side but in a heap, as though struggling to get up. That was very good luck, and it meant that the ghost of the dead man would be well served forever by the ghost of the horse.

Afterwards, Red Hawk sat on the brow of the hill for two days and thought of the dead old man. Then he returned to the village.

Red Hawk went to the tepee of Lazy Wolf, but to his amazement that lodge had disappeared. When he inquired, he was told that the tepee had already been packed and was far off on the plain, winding along the trail.

He got on the White Horse and went in pursuit like streaking light.

As Red Hawk drew near, he saw the white man climb down from the wagon and come back down the trail. There he encountered Red Hawk, who threw himself down from the white stallion and grasped the hand of his old friend.

"What does it mean, Lazy Wolf?" he asked. "You go away without saying good-bye."

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"I left you a letter in the hands of Standing Bull," said Lazy Wolf. "It was better to go off without seeing you. It was a lot better."

"Why was it better?" asked Red Hawk.

"Women," said Lazy Wolf, "drove me away from my own people; and it's a woman who drives me back to them again. I don't know everything that's in her mind, but I know that it is time to go."

"She is driving on," said Red Hawk. "And yet she knows you are on foot. This is strange!"

"She's driving on, and that's why I can't stay here to spend a long time yarning with you, Red Hawk," said the other. "I'll have to hurry two miles, now, to catch up with her."

"But what is the matter with her?" asked Red Hawk.

"There is a great pain in her heart," said Lazy Wolf, calmly.

"That is very bad. Can Running Elk do anything for her?"

"Only one man in the world can do anything for her. And she doesn't want to see him. Good-bye, Red Hawk. I'm trying to wish you more luck than you are likely to have when you run into Wind Walker. Pray to Sweet Medicine and shoot straight!"

"But wait!" cried Red Hawk, as his friend turned. "Let me ride ahead and stop Blue Bird, so that she'll wait for you. I must say good-bye to her!"

"She has said good-bye to you already," answered the father. "And she won't want to see you now.—Don't follow us, my lad."

"But what am I to understand?" cried Red Hawk.

"A few years from now you'll open your eyes—if you're still wearing a scalp and walking the ground. Then you'll understand all about it," said Lazy Wolf, and he began to jog along after the disappearing wagon.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WAR PARTY.

AMONG the Cheyennes a man was judged by acts, not words. That was why the tribe felt that the grief of Red Hawk for the death of his foster-father was greater than anything that had ever been known before, because when he gave away the possessions in the lodge of Spotted Antelope, down to the skins of the lodge itself, what with the cases of knives, the little barrels of gunpowder, the rolls of bullet lead, the bullet molds, the guns, the beads, the hatchets, the axes, there was at least a small pouring of powder or a small handful of the best of bright beads for every man, woman, or child in the camp.

At night, he sat by and watched Dull Hatchet and Standing Bull in war paint lead the dance with every eye in the camp looking on. A war party against the Pawnees would start soon. As for Red Hawk, it was sufficient if he smoked and watched. For he had at last achieved his place in the tribe. For the first time in these many years, Red Hawk was content, for he had found his people and his people had found him.

White Wolf took the two dead Bailey brothers into the town of Witherell. He was equipped with a letter to Richard Lester in which Red Hawk had written, briefly, that the two white men had quarreled with one another and that they were both dead. All their goods were being sent back so that the white men could see that the hands of Red Hawk were clean.

The important thing for Red Hawk

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to decide, at this time, was whether or not he would accompany the war party that was to strike the Pawnees. He was not sure what he ought to do. There was a rumor that Wind Walker was even now among the Pawnees, and the great goal of Red Hawk's actions must be, now, to come to grips with the famous white man.

But he was by no means sure that Wind Walker was in fact among the Pawnees. Therefore he waited from day to day until he might receive a sign from Sweet Medicine.

SO he came to the last evening before Dull Hatchet and the rest were to start on the trail—forty braves chosen from the best.

The camp had fallen asleep peacefully. But a moment after Red Hawk had closed his eyes, there was a murmur and then a sudden outbreak of howling and barking from the dogs. Through this cut the sound of rifles. Red Hawk came out of his tepee with a loaded gun in his hands.

The moon was westering. It shone through a thin haze. Rifles glinted here and there, but what Red Hawk noticed first of all was that the White Horse was not in front of the lodge! He was gone—like a part of Red Hawk's body—and yonder, in the press of the stampeding horses, there was the gleam of the great white crest which tossed like the foam of a wave above the rest of the tumult.

A man sat on the back of the monster. That was what staggered Red Hawk so that he stood helplessly staring. It could not be that the White Horse had submitted to the rule of any other hand than his own, and yet the convincing picture was there before his eyes!

A great cry was rising from the Cheyennes.

"Wind Walker!—Wind Walker!" they were shouting.

THAT name made Red Hawk groan. What other men were unable to do, Wind Walker could easily accomplish, even to the mastering of the White Horse.

Red Hawk borrowed the first pony at hand, without asking for the owner. He clipped a saddle over the back of the little horse, and, rifle in hand, was carried out of the camp on the heels of a cloud of avengers which had blown from among the tepees.

He could not get full speed out of his mount. He was accustomed to the White Horse, as to a great river of wind that carried a man easily over plains or mountains. And the little mustang that bobbed in its stride seemed to be moving no more swiftly than a rocking-horse.

Yet something more than the horse was carrying him along. He hardly knew why there was such a feeling of Fate upon him. He only knew that he never would turn back from this trail until he had the White Horse between his knees again.

He heard the rapid thunder of the hoofs, speeding away with half the wealth of the Cheyenne camp. From voices that yelled in rage and hate, now and again, he knew that the raid had been made by Pawnees, headed by Wind Walker.

Red Hawk began to laugh, for it seemed plain to him now that Fate was working again, and that the hand of Sweet Medicine was driving him on. Had not all of this been devised in order to include him, with or without his will, in the raid against Wind Walker?

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

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Hick Sheriff

By CHARLES HAVEN

Dale Garland had been condemned to hang—but he was too clever to let any hick sheriff hang him

The deputy thrust a revolver toward him

THE trial was over, the Pine City judge and jury had done their duty as they saw it, the prisoner had been returned to his cell in the new brick jail behind the old wooden courthouse. A man above the average in size, looks, and cleverness, the prisoner was, and not past thirty. A stranger in this half of the United States, he had chosen a very pretty name for himself. The name he'd chosen was Dale Garland.

His sentence did not upset him greatly. He'd been in tight squeezes before. No hick sheriff, in Kentucky's hills or anywhere else, would ever hang him! Dale Garland had been studiously courting young Sheriff Napoleon Metford — Pine City called him Pole—since the very hour of his arrest, seeking to make capital of Metford's easy-going good nature. Condemned to die, Garland was resolved to court the hick sheriff with a vengeance now.

"I shorely feel bad about him," Metford told his billygoat-bearded old chief deputy, a week before the day set for the execution. The two sat in Metford's office, which was in a front corner of the squat jail building. "It's hard to believe that Garland's the feller to kill a lone old man, Zee."

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"I ain't been 'zackly able to convince myself o' that, Pole, to tell you the truth," Zee Ballard confessed. He aimed an amber arc at the sawdust box. "But judge and jury decided he done it, which relieves you o' responsibility in the matter. Pole, do you remember when you was asked, on election day, what you'd do if yore own brother stood convicted o' murder and it was up to you to hang him—remember what you said?"

"Yes," drawled Metford. Suddenly his lean cheeks felt as though they were filled with tiny needlepoints. "I said I'd hang him."

"And you'll hang Dale Garland." Again old Zee spat at the sawdust box. "Listen, Pole. You got a fashion o' steppin' in to see Garland two or three times a day, talkin' with him, takin' him cigarettes and the like. You've even got Miss Idy Lou bakin' cakes for him. Well, don't you know that the more you see o' Dale the harder it'll be for you to spring the trap when the final day comes?"

"Hell, that's right, ain't it?" exploded the young sheriff. "But he ain't got a friend on earth, and I'm sorry for him. Damn it, Zee, that feller ain't any ord'nary scrub. He's a edgicated man. He—here comes Idy Lou."

"With another cake!" Zee Ballard grinned. "Pole, I nearly wish I was in jail myself. Mornin', Miss Idy!"

The pretty, half-buxom Ida Lou Irby nodded and smiled. Her cheeks took on a deeper shade of pink as her gaze met that of Pole Metford. Everybody in Pine City knew that they were to be married. She said:

"I'd like to give this to Mr. Garland, Pole."

Metford rose, reached for his key ring. "Shore, Idy. Come along."

The condemned man in his cell near by stole soundlessly over to his narrow bed and sat down. When the girl and her escort appeared in the corridor his eyes were not crafty, and on his lips there was no twisted smile.

"GOOD morning, Mr. Garland," brightly said Metford's fiancée. "I've brought an angel cake for you this time."

"Oh, thanks. It's wonderful of you, Miss Irby!" Garland's smile seemed infinitely sad. He went eagerly toward the iron-latticed door. At once his clever brain manufactured a pseudo-pathetic quip: "That sort of cake is quite appropriate now, Miss Irby, you know, because I'll soon be an angel!"

"Oh, I didn't—didn't think!" the girl cried, gulping in spite of herself.

Metford's countenance was very solemn. He unlocked the iron door and the girl delivered the present. Garland shot a covert sidewise glance toward the big revolver that the officer wore holstered against his right hip. Had Garland not known that the easy-going Metford could be amazingly fast with that weapon—but he did know it.

"I'm sure I won't forget your kindness to me, Miss Irby," he said, bowing like a cavalier. "I only wish I could find words to tell you just how much you—and the sheriff, too—have brightened this dark road for me!"

Actually there were tears in his eyes. He made sure that both the visitors saw them. Then he broke out: "I tell you, sheriff, I'm not guilty. I'm a victim of malign Fate. My footprints were in that old man's yard, I know, but I'd stopped there for a drink of water. And I did have his money, it seems. I tell you, I found that money in the road after I'd left the house."

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Metford had heard that a hundred times. He reminded:

"It wasn't them facts that convicted you, Garland, not altogether. That one hair in old Mr. Truesdale's fist was out o' yore head, or else the mic'oscope lied; there was a speck o' skin under one o' his fingernails, and yore face was scratched; you'd lost a button off o' yore coat, and it was picked up in the Truesdale house. Mustn't forget that."

"Malign Fate," half sobbed Garland. "I can't begin to explain it. Because I've always had a yen for wandering, and have neither home nor relatives, doesn't mean that life isn't sweet to me. But—Miss Irby, I hasten to apologize for having made you feel so badly! Really, I didn't mean to. Please accept my thanks for this wonderful cake."

"I hope you'll enjoy it," the girl said thickly.

Metford locked the cell door and led her away. Dale Garland's face would have been a rare study for a criminologist. He winked at himself when he overheard the sheriff's fiancée telling the sheriff, in the near-by office:

"Oh, Pole, I can't believe he's guilty. I simply can't. Why, such a man just couldn't be!" The crime was so heinous.

"The co't decided he was," replied Metford. But his voice somehow lacked strength.

"He's such a—a gentleman," murmured Ida Lou.

Garland sat down. The thing was going finely, and he was well pleased with himself. Was he an actor? He grinned darkly. George Arliss and the Barrymores would be green with envy had they been present. Genuine tears. Hanged by a hick sheriff? Not if he knew it!

But he sobered as he took the wrapping from the angel cake. He had only a week left. They'd soon be building a gallows back there in the jailyard.

A FEW days passed. Metford had been in to see him often. Another cake had arrived, and the sheriff's pretty sweetheart had arrived with it. She had been trying to arouse public sentiment in his favor, and hadn't been as successful as she'd wished, but he wasn't to lose hope. Garland promised that he wouldn't. He could see that Pole Metford was growing shaky.

Then he began to wonder how they'd work it. Leave his cell door unlocked at night, perhaps. Slip a gun in to him, maybe, so that he could force the night jailer to set him free. The gallows had been erected. Although Garland's confidence scarcely wavered, the looming slender structure made him half nervous.

Early on the night next to that which the law had decreed was to be his last, a horny hand came in between the bars of his cell window, and beckoned to him. He saw it dimly in the yellow light of the corridor lamp. He rose, glanced toward the door, hurried to the window. His keen and eager gaze made out the billygoat-bearded face of old Deputy Zee Ballard just beyond the bars.

"Listen," whispered Ballard. "Pole Metford is so sick over havin' to hang you that he's plumb pitiful. If he wasn't the man he is, he'd crawfish out of it. You like Pole, too, don't you?"

"I love him as a brother," the condemned man whispered back promptly. "I've never known anybody I liked better. Please believe me when I tell you that the grief of it to him is worse

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to me than my having to die! I've wished—you can't imagine how I've wished—that there was a way out for him. As for me, myself—"

Garland broke off with a most eloquent shrug. Ballard said:

"Well, there *is* a way out for him."

"What?—how?"

"If you was to kill yoreself tonight, you wouldn't be losin' much," said the old deputy; "then Pole wouldn't haf to hang you, don't you see?"

This came as a distinct jar to that killer of a lone old man. He went on with his flawless acting.

"I do see. In fact, I'd just been thinking of that very thing. But I have no weapon, which you know quite well."

In reply to that statement Zee Ballard thrust a large double-action revolver toward the bars of the window and into Dale Garland's hand.

Garland curbed his amazement, hurried to his bed and sat down. The weapon, he saw, was loaded. Six cartridges, new and bright. What fools they were! But probably Pole Metford knew nothing whatever about this. It was the doing of that silly old deputy, beyond a doubt. The gun felt good in his hand. Again and again he pressed the trigger until the hammer came halfway back. He shook a fist toward the gallows that loomed between him and the early stars.

The night jailer would soon be reporting for duty, and Metford and Ballard would go home. It would be easy then.

Not long afterward, footfalls rang in the corridor. Garland went nimbly to his feet. The figure had almost reached the cell door when Garland, the gun leveled in his hand, sprang to a point very close to the iron latticework. It wasn't the night jailer. It was Pole Metford!

"Hands up—quick!" blazed the prisoner, between teeth that were grinding, his eyes glittering—he had jabbed the muzzle of the weapon almost against Metford's heart. "You know I'll shoot, damned well you know it! Now unlock the door, you poor boob!"

"So this," quietly observed the officer, with his slow smile, "is how you love me like a brother. I won't unlock the door, Garland. You can pull the trigger when you're ready. But you'll die just the same."

Garland's lips were bloodless and flecked with the foam of a mad rage. His eyes showed half white. "You think I won't shoot you, do you?"

He did pull the trigger. Twice he pulled it, thrice. There were three futile metallic snaps! He gasped an oath of bewilderment and hurled the useless weapon against the iron lattice; it fell on the corridor floor. Pole Metford drawled:

"I just wanted to satisfy myself about you, Garland, and I done it; I can hang you now without turnin' a single eyelash, because I know you murdered a lone old man for forty-three dollars."

"Yeah?" It was the snarl of a thug.

"Yeah. If you'd tried to kill yoreself, instead o' tryin' to kill me, a petition of a thousand names—includin' the trial judge and jury's and mine—would 'a' went to the Governor tomorrow askin' clemency; and you'd 'a' got it, life instead o' death. I had took the firin'-pin out o' that gun, if it'll do you any good to know. Good night, slicker."

THE END.

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The Men Who Make The Argosy

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

Author of "A Show of Hands," "Lad," "Bruce," etc.

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE was fated almost from the first to be a writer. His father was a Congregational pastor, and his mother was a writer of well known novels under the name of "Marion Harland." Terhune was born in Newark some sixty years ago, and was educated at Columbia.

His boxing coach at Columbia tried to get him to turn professional, saying, "God never built you so big and rugged just to push a damned pen all day long." He had boxed several rounds apiece with Corbett, Fitzsimmons, Kid McCoy, and other great fighters, and was not knocked out. Corbett called him the best amateur heavyweight in America. But he turned instead to newspaper work, and eventually to fiction writing.

For a time he traveled on horseback through Syria and Egypt, living among the Bedouins of the desert, and gaining material for a book.

Terhune is most widely famed as a writer of stories about dogs; yet his writing career has been unusually versatile. For instance, he claims to be the original ghost writer.

In support of the claim he points out that during his newspaper days his editors had him become, at one time or another, Lillian Russell, Jim Jeffries, David Belasco, Jim Corbett, Ten Popular Actresses—all ten of them!—Ten Beautiful Shopgirls, Fighting Terry McGovern, and a host of other surprising incarnations.

He broke into fiction writing through ARGOSY, turning out his stories at night while he did newspaper editorial work in the daytime. For a decade he wrote two or three serials a year for this magazine, ranging from historical novels to sport and modern adventure.

For a long time he wanted to write stories about the dogs he loved so well, but it was not until 1915 that he found an editor courageous enough to print his dog stories!

Six feet two and weighing over two hundred pounds, he has always been a devotee of fencing, boxing, swimming, and rowing. He is a prominent breeder of prize collies, on his New Jersey estate, "Sunnybank," and is a recognized authority on dogs in fact as well as fiction.

His literary work to-day includes biography, philosophical articles, and religious studies. But a world-wide circle of readers demands that he continue to write stories and books about dogs. He has to his credit many stories, movies, books, poems, and articles. His wife, Anice Terhune, is both a writer and a composer of note. And at Sunnybank, Terhune continues to write—and study his dogs.

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Argonotes.

The Readers' Viewpoint

ARGOSY pays $1 for each letter printed. Send your letter to "Argonotes" Editor, ARGOSY, 280 Broadway, N Y. C.

UNBEATABLE elevens:

Newark, N. J.

I've read the ARGOSY for three years now and have enjoyed it more than any other magazine. Now you have me and forever you'll keep me.

Here's a few bouquets: First, to A. Merritt for his two swell stories, "The Dwellers in the Mirage" and "Burn, Witch, Burn." Second, to Edgar R. Burroughs for his three excellent efforts, "Tarzan and the City of Gold," "The Pirates of Venus," and "Lost on Venus." Third, to Fred MacIsaac for his steady output of masterpieces such as "Pirates of Wall Street," "The Golden Serpent," "The King Who Came Back," "Power," "The Unknown Island," "The Band of Death," and "Burning Billions." How does that man do it? Four, to Theodore Roscoe for his "The Kingdom of Hell," one of the greatest novels ever to appear in your magazine. Fifth, to H. Bedford-Jones for his "Bellegarde," the best story of that type that I have ever read. Dumas is a mucker beside him. Sixth, to George F. Worts for his "The Decoy." which held me in a tension all the way through it. Seventh, to Austin Hall for his "The Spot of Life," one of the most unusual stories I have ever had the pleasure to read. Eighth, to Charles Alden Seltzer for his unbeatable Westerns, "Double Cross Ranch," "Breath of the Desert," and "Clear the Trail." The last story is the best of the three. What a hero that guy *Michael Dolan* was! Mr. Seltzer certainly draws some very perfect character analizations in his novels. Ninth, to Otis Adelbert Kline for his "The Swordsman of Mars," a science-fiction tale that a feller could almost think possible. I became one of the characters of that story when I read it. Tenth, to Max Brand for his "The Longhorn Feud" and "The Masterman." There's versatility for you, two different types of stories by the same author. Eleventh, to Frank L. Packard for his "The Hidden Door," a story without a peer. And, there, we have ARGOSY's unbeatable football team.

The second team, though, isn't far behind in the standing, in fact, they're so close that the first team can only beat them by field goals. Bouquets are still left so the first goes to F. V. W. Mason for his "Captain Renegade." This author has only one peer, Charles Minnegerode Maigne, who, sorry to say, is reclining six feet under. Second, to Loring Brent for his *Peter the Brazen* stories, especially "The Sapphire Death," the best of them all. Third, to J. E. Grinstead for his "The Red Scalp," a peach of a tale. Was that exciting! Fourth, to W. C. Tuttle for his humorous Westerns. They cause an epidemic of laughter in my house whenever they come our way. Fifth, Erle Stanley Gardner for his desert stories. They are unique beyond a doubt. We grab 'em whenever the chance shows itself. Sixth, Johnson McCulley for his stories about Southern California and about that mysterious character *Zorro* of his. Seventh, to Sinclair Gluck for his "Red Emeralds," a story of the type that ARGOSY doesn't publish often. Eighth, to Frank Richardson Pierce for his "timber" stories. He can't be beat for that type of story. Ninth, to Ray Cummings for his "Insect Invasion." What a nightmare that was! Tenth, to Lieut. John Hopper for his unbeatable sport stories. Eleventh, to Hulbert Footner whenever he feels like bringing *Mme. Storey* out of the moth balls. Say what you will, that is the best selection I can make for the second team.

JAMES I. LAKE, JR.

"THE Sapphire Death" hit the spot:

New York, N. Y.

I have just finished reading Loring Brent's "The Sapphire Death," and to use the colloquial expression, I think it's "swell." This novel is one of the best ARGOSY has ever published; and, believe it or not, that's saying something! Here's to you, Mr. Brent!

Paul Stahr is up to his usual standard. Albert Payson Terhune's short stories are really good. Why doesn't he write a serial? T. S. Stribling's novel is coming along well. Stookie Allen's article isn't so bad, but its art work can be improved.

I have been reading ARGOSY for almost five years, and this is the first time I've had the courage to offer my criticisms. I have just read Mr. J. Darrow's letter, and I agree with him. Your novelettes are now no longer than they used

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to be. The only improvement is a few more short stories. I am sure that your readers would rather have another serial instead of a couple of short stories.

Except for the few "kicks" I have mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the ARGOSY is as excellent as it always was, and it always was excellent.

Bon voyage!

HAROLD S. NEMSER.

Sturgis, Mich.

Just a line to let you know what I think about your swell magazine. I haven't been reading it very long—"The Pirates of Venus" started me off—but so far have nothing but the highest of praise for it. I read several magazines, but none of them can begin to compare with ARGOSY; I have liked every story I have ever read in it, and I read most of them.

Congratulations to Loring Brent for his "The Sapphire Death." It is "absotively" and "posolutely" the best story I have ever read. I thought that there could never be a story more to my liking than A. Merritt's "Burn, Witch, Burn!" but this one surpasses it, in my estimation, by the slenderest of margins—and that's going some!

Among my favorite authors are Loring Brent, A. Merritt, Frank L. Packard, Charles Alden Seltzer, Max Brand, E. R. Burroughs, O. A. Kline, and Ray Cummings. You see, I aspire heavily to fantastics.

I have no crazy suggestions as to how to improve ARGOSY; it can't be done. Keep it as it is.

JEANNE WRIGHT.

LIKES *Mme. Storey:*

Philadelphia, Pa.

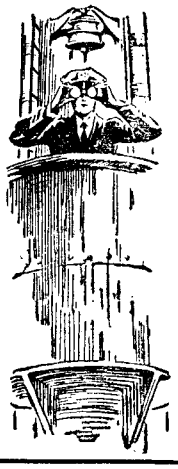
I have wanted to write to you for some time to tell you I enjoy your magazine, but somehow never got around to it till now.

I have just finished reading "Wolves of Monte Carlo," by Hulbert Footner. I was so surprised and pleased when I picked up your magazine and saw at the top "A Mme. Storey Novelette." I actually devoured it and did not let up till I finished it.

In your other editions I enjoyed "The Earth Shaker" and "World's End." Some time ago you had a story called "The Snake Mother." I don't know who the author was. [A. Merritt—Ed.] Why not have another one about her? How about some more of our jungle man, *Tarzan?*

Wish all the luck to you, ARGOSY, for the next —oh, so many years.

E. M. G.



Looking Ahead!

Walt Coburn

Makes his bow to ARGOSY with an exciting Western novel. Two young cowboys, last survivors of two feuding families, are adopted by an old rancher. But it took six-guns to settle their rivalry.

SONS OF GUN FIGHTERS

TWO NOVELETTES

Partners All

Hunting Alaska gold with a murderer among the partners!

By Jack Allman

On Ice

Danger and daring and trickery on the auto race-track.

By Richard Howells Watkins

COMING TO YOU IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—OCTOBER 14

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"One Week from To-night You'll See PROOF that I can make You a New Man!"

NOTE—No other man in the world has ever DARED make such an offer!

Charles Atlas

My amazing discovery, *Dynamic Tension*, changed me from a 97-lb. weakling into the *champion* you see here—twice winner of the title, *"The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."*

I GIVE MORE than "promises." I give PROOF! If you're sick and tired of half-baked ideas—if you really **want** a build like mine—then **one week**, just 7 DAYS, is all I need to **prove** I can give it to you!

You've **got** a body, man. Why not make it a real handsome **man's** body! There's NO good reason why you shouldn't have rippling cords of mighty muscle across your neck and shoulders. No reason at all why your chest shouldn't be strapping, big and husky like mine—your arms and legs powerful—your wind lasting—your vigor and pep **100%!**

I used to be a sickly, half-pint runt weighing only 97 lbs.—a "laughing-stock" wherever I went. No fun. No friends. Right there I almost "fell" for some of these freak spring or weight contraptions to make me "strong." But THEN—by the luckiest break of my life—I discovered **Dynamic Tension.**

Apparatus is OUT!

Look at me now. You don't see any skinny, flabby, no-account bag of bones **here,** do you? This is what my remarkable secret has done for **my** body. Twice—against all comers—I have won the title, "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." No wonder I've got no use for tricky apparatus or machines that may strain your heart or other vital organs. I've found the **natural** way to build the husky, solid, fighting muscles that Nature **means** for you to have! And I've shown thousands of other fellows, many of them probably much worse off than you, how to develop themselves into champions MY way!

I'll give you clean-cut health **inside,** too—show you exactly how to get rid of constipation, poor digestion, bad breath, pimples, and other weaknesses that are robbing you of the good times and things in life that can be yours.

Now make me PROVE I can do it. Let me send **you** the FREE Book that opens the door to **he-man living.** Just tell me where to send it. Use the coupon. There's no obligation. But—be MAN enough to **send** the coupon NOW!

FREE BOOK

My big book, "Everlasting Health and Strength"—packed with actual photographs and vital facts every fellow must know to face life—tells the whole remarkable story of **Dynamic Tension.** Privately printed for me, it's FREE if you act AT ONCE. Are you ready to learn my secret?—ready to learn how I can give YOU the kind of body that will make you a masterful **leader?** Then tell me where to send your copy of my book. Fill in the coupon below, and mail TODAY to me personally. Address: **CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 12-10, 133 E. 23rd St., New York City.**

MAIL COUPON FOR FREE BOOK

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 12-10, 133 East 23rd Street, New York City.

I want the proof that your system of Dynamic Tension will make a New Man of me—give me healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

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(Please print or write plainly)

Address.....

City.....State.....

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IT TAKES HEALTHY NERVES TO FLY THE MAIL AT NIGHT

● A. M. WILKINS has flown the night air mail over 150,000 miles for TWA. It takes healthy nerves to hang up a record like that!

● RIGHT—Wilkins joins a fellow pilot, W. Niedernhofer, at Newark Airport, for a chat and a smoke. "Camels never ruffle or jangle my nerves," Wilkins says.

● JOURNEY'S END! Camels never get on your nerves no matter how much you smoke.

IT IS MORE FUN TO KNOW

Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE tobaccos than any other popular brand. They are milder, richer in flavor. They never tire your taste or get on your nerves.

STEADY SMOKERS TURN TO CAMELS

A. M. WILKINS, air-mail ace, says: "It's a steady grind, all right, living up to our tradition that *the mail must go through!* That's why I smoke Camels. And I smoke plenty! Camels never ruffle or jangle my nerves, and I like their mild, rich flavor."

Camels never tire the taste—never get on the nerves. *Your* taste and *your* nerves will confirm this. Start smoking Camels today and prove it for yourself.

Copyright, 1933, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company

Camel's Costlier Tobaccos

NEVER GET ON YOUR NERVES
NEVER TIRE YOUR TASTE

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